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The 27th Legislature
First Session

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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature

First Session

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 Mitzel, Len, Cypress-Medicine Hat, Deputy Chair of Committees

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[Errata, if any, appear inside back cover]

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 5, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Welcome back.

Let us pray. At the beginning of this week we ask for renewed strength in the awareness of our duty and privilege as members of the Legislature. We ask for the protection of this Assembly and also the province we are elected to serve. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, would you please now remain standing. We'll be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Paul Lorieau, who's in the Speaker's gallery. Please join in in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the consul general for Switzerland in Vancouver, Mr. Walter Deplazes, who is sitting in the Speaker's gallery. Switzerland is an important trading partner for Alberta. Two-way trade between Alberta and Switzerland averages over \$240 million per year, and like many immigrants we have been fortunate to attract to Alberta over the years, the Swiss have played a role in developing this province and making Alberta one of if not the greatest place in the world to live. Alberta's quality of life is strengthened through community and cultural activities and the people who are at the heart of our communities, people like those of Swiss descent who help enrich Alberta by volunteering with organizations like the Calgary Swiss Club Matterhorn, the Edmonton Swiss choir, folk dance groups, and more. I would ask that our honoured guest please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have the pleasure of introducing two different groups, and I wish to introduce them to you and through you to all Members of this Legislative Assembly. The first one is three young gentlemen with a dedicated interest in the political process in Alberta. The first gentleman, Mr. Matthew Bissett, currently serves as the Progressive Conservative Youth association director for Strathcona county, the newly re-elected youth VP. He's also studying political science and economics at Grant MacEwan College. He's accompanied today by Mr. Spencer Bennett, who is studying business at Grant MacEwan, and Mr. Jerry Aulenbach, who has a bachelor of education degree from

the University of Alberta. These three outstanding young Albertans call Alberta home, have chosen to be educated in our fine schools, and have made a tremendous contribution to their communities in this great province of Alberta. I ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to introduce to you and through you again to the Members of this Legislative Assembly very special guests from Living Stones Christian Academy in Tofield. There are seven students accompanied by a number of adults, 11 visitors in total, that visited earlier, and we had the pleasure of taking a picture. Teacher and group leader Mrs. Carol Rurka, helper Miss Jennifer Thiessen, and parents Mrs. Connie Olson and Mrs. Naola Patrie. May they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly very special guests, nine students from Cadotte Lake school. They're from Cadotte Lake, Alberta, approximately 500 kilometres north of Edmonton. They are here attending School at the Legislature, and they're accompanied by their teacher, Ms Kimi Jann. They've done a lot of fundraising to get here, so I'm hoping that I'll be able to take them out to Boston Pizza later. They're seated in the members' gallery. I'd ask that they all stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. The first is a group of students with Careers in Transition. They are seated in the public gallery. Joining us today are Savannah Wenzel, James Reid, Jayson Smith, Jason Reddenkop, and Donna Hayward, and they're accompanied by their teacher or group leader, Kelsey Hynes. I would ask if they would please rise and accept the warm welcome of the House today.

My second introduction today, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three women who are associated with the Natural Childbirth Clinic in St. Albert. The first is Mary Lawless, who helped form this clinic. Mary, if you'd stand. Joining her is the RN who works there, Margaret Hauptman, and the doula, Addie Moores. Those people are standing, and again I ask you to join me in welcoming them to the Alberta Legislature.

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

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It brings me a great deal of pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two very special guests. My father, Merrill Redford, and my cousin Syd Smale of Edmonton are here for the day and are joining us for the proceedings this afternoon. I must say that my father has been an inspiration to me as I've worked in public service. He's been a wonderful father, a wonderful grandfather, and a tremendous sign campaign chairman. I just want to thank him very much and welcome him and ask them to rise and receive the very warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you the Alberta Seniors Advisory Council. The council is meeting here today discussing

issues from seniors, linking with seniors across our province. They are the eyes and ears of the ministry. North to south, east to west these folks play an integral part of representing seniors here in this Legislature. Today with us is Dianne Laird, Jackie Katan, Chi Loo, Janet Harding, Diana Anderson, Harjit Rai, Dawn Parent, Clyde Elford, Bill Forbes, Bev Homeniuk, Laurie Lyckman, Leonard Olson, Diane Caleffi, and missing is Jean Dreger. A special thank you to retiring board member Maureen Hemingway Schloss. They're seated in your gallery. I'd ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

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

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly two groups who are visiting the Legislature today. The first is a very special person, Mr. Pal Singh Purewal. Mr. Purewal has contributed to the Sikh community in many ways. He's well known in the city and founded the Sikh calendar, which is widely recognized world-wide. His name is linked to the city of Edmonton for the creation of this calendar. It's a great honour for me to introduce Mr. Purewal. I would like to ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce the second group: four Sikh volunteers. The official opening of the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute and the fourth floor Guru Nanak Dev Healing Garden was this past Thursday. I would like to introduce these four volunteers, who are here in the public gallery today. Their names are Jatinder Singh Riat, Sital Singh Nanuan, Bikkar Singh Randhawa, and Jaspal Singh Bansal. I would like to recognize Dr. Arvind Koshal for his contribution to the world-class facility that is the Mazankowski Heart Institute. These four gentlemen worked very hard on this project. It's a great honour for me to introduce these four volunteers to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly. I would like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the House two visitors from Newfoundland, Mr. and Mrs. Jim and Mary Butt. These two will be touring the Legislature today as well as many other exciting attractions that our city of Edmonton has to offer. They are accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Bob and Debbie Michalyk, two constituents from Edmonton-Decore. I'd ask them all to please rise and receive the usual warm welcome of our Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Mr. Anderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of this Assembly two very important people in my life seated in the public gallery. The first is my beautiful wife, Anita, who is the biggest single reason why I'm able to serve here today, as well as my mother-in-law, Jeanette Cyr. Now, Jeanette is joining us from the great state of Missouri, which we know, of course, is the Show Me State. She thought that she needed to see first-hand that I had actually been elected to this Assembly. We all know that behind every successful man is a great woman and a very surprised mother-in-law. I'd ask them to stand and please accept our warm welcome.

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

Ms. Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Barbara Scriver. Barbara is both a registered nurse and a registered midwife. Her path to midwifery began after the home birth of her third child in 1979. After 10 years of pursuing midwifery in Saskatchewan, she and her family moved to Edmonton, and she is now one of two practising midwives in Edmonton. Today Barbara is visiting the Assembly as a representative of the Alberta Association of Midwives, who rallied today on the steps of the Legislature and called on the government to publicly fund midwife services throughout the province. It is my honour and my pleasure on behalf of my constituents and all Alberta women to recognize Barbara Scriver and the Alberta Association of Midwives for their ongoing efforts and commitment. I would ask that Barbara please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I am pleased today to introduce two members of the executive of the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, NAOSH. Sarah King is the co-chair of the Edmonton NAOSH committee, and with her is Mr. Trevor Johnson, the incoming provincial NAOSH chair and past president of the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering for Edmonton. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional greeting of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

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

Guru Nanak Dev Healing Garden

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Members of this Legislative Assembly attended the opening of the Mazankowski Heart Institute last Thursday at the University of Alberta. This institute has been recognized as the best in the world in its field, and we were honoured to have Prime Minister Stephen Harper attend the opening.

The Guru Nanak Shrine Fellowship of Edmonton's Sikh community has raised over \$2.3 million from donors across Canada for the naming rights of the Guru Nanak Dev Healing Garden. The money is still coming in from donors to this day. This is a proud moment for Edmonton's Sikh community and for all Sikhs across Canada. I am proud to be a Sikh Canadian.

The healing garden is named after Guru Nanak Dev, the founder and spiritual leader of the Sikh religion. His main teachings are sincere love for God, honest earning, and sharing earnings with the needy. I believe that the work and donations by the Sikh community reflect these ideals.

The Edmonton Sikh community is also very thankful for the recognition by the Minister of Education, Mr. Speaker, and I am very honoured and proud to have been part of such a wonderful project.

Thank you.

Commemoration of Holodomor

Mrs. Leskiw: Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian of Ukrainian ancestry and as chair of the Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations I rise to speak about a tragic man-made famine that was forced on Ukraine

in 1932-33 by the communist regime of the day. Known as the Holodomor, this ruthless act of genocide was imposed on innocent Ukrainians, resulting in the systematic annihilation of some 10 million Ukrainian men, women, and children. To put this number into perspective, that is like the population of Alberta, B.C., Saskatchewan, and Manitoba combined. It was a horrific period in Ukrainian history, but in spite of this the spirit of Ukrainians survived and rebounded.

Last weekend the 75th anniversary of this famine was officially commemorated when the International Remembrance Flame arrived in Alberta from Australia and was presented to our Premier by Mr. Horlatsch, himself a survivor of the famine. In recognition of the tragic famine, our Premier has just announced that later this year provincial legislation will be brought forward and led by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, co-chair of our Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the many survivors who endured this tragedy as children and today, as with every day of their lives, relive the horrors faced by their brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and others who perished by one of the most painful methods of extermination: starvation. May their memory live forever, and may such tragedy never be repeated.

[Remarks in Ukrainian] Eternal memory be upon them.

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

International Day of the Midwife

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today, May 5, is International Day of the Midwife, not something we can really celebrate here in Alberta because although we do now recognize midwives as a legal occupation, midwifery services are still not covered under Alberta health care. We have decreasing capacity in the obstetrics field, we have increased demand with a surge in babies being born, but the government has dithered and studied and thought for almost 20 years, and no core funding for midwifery.

Let's remember that childbirth is not a disease. It is not poor health. It is a natural process. Most births are uncomplicated and do not require medical intervention. Midwives serve most of the world's mothers just fine, but we don't get that choice in Alberta. Despite the oft-demonstrated evidence of significantly lower costs for a midwife-assisted delivery as compared to a hospital delivery, we still can't get midwifery services covered under health care. The government seems intransigent in the face of women's choice, good value for money, less expensive costs, high demand for the service, and alleviating strain in the hospital system. What gives? What possible reason does the government have for not funding this?

1:50

This issue has been pilot projected to death. Then it was handed off to primary care networks, but these are family docs, and midwives are not high on their priority list. We had the one position on the Midwifery Health Discipline Committee representing women consumers, and it was cut. Did we ever get the integration of midwifery services evaluation project report? This report was commissioned in 1997, but as of two years ago we still didn't have a public copy. The final excuse I've heard is that now there are not enough midwives remaining in the province to make it practical. Well, whose fault is that?

So, boys, make it so. You have the facts, figures, demand, and capacity. Now all you have to do is fund midwifery services under health care. Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Environmentally Sustainable Oil Sands Development

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations has returned from his mission to Washington, trying to greenwash this government's embarrassing environmental record. Last Monday 500 birds landed on a toxic tailings pond near Fort McMurray, and fewer than five came out alive. The same day the minister was writing on his website that "Alberta is proving to the world that you can produce energy in an environmentally responsible manner." My first question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. Given the massive scale and lethal toxicity of the oil sands tailings ponds, does he agree with the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations that this is environmentally responsible?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, we should probably take up a collection for wax removal tools for the Leader of the Opposition. He didn't seem to hear any of the answers that were given to precisely those questions last week. We have a system in place. There were conditions of operation at the tailings pond for waterfowl mitigation and deterrence. They appear not to have worked. There's an investigation under way. It's irresponsible for him to continually in this Chamber ask questions that potentially endanger the accuracy of that investigation.

Dr. Taft: Well, to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations: did the minister in any of his meetings in Washington inform the Americans that there are tailings ponds covering 50 square kilometres on the edge of a major river that are so toxic they kill 99 per cent of the waterfowl that land on them?

Mr. Stevens: Well, Mr. Speaker, I met with many Americans and talked about the oil sands, and I talked about the advantages of the oil sands as a source of oil for the United States. It is significant for them. I talked about the environmental record that we have, I talked about the climate change policy that we have, and I can tell you that the folks I met with were very interested in what we're doing.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Well, thank you. To the same minister: given that the minister's blog from Washington quotes him saying that we have "a carbon capture and storage plan that will reduce our emissions 70 per cent by 2050" when the actual plan, the truthful plan, has a target of 14 per cent reduction, why is this minister spreading misinformation in Washington, around Alberta, and around the world?

Mr. Stevens: Well, Mr. Speaker, I must say that the people that I met with in Washington had some questions with respect to what we're doing here. We've invited the ones that wish to pursue it to come to Alberta. We'll spend more time with them here. I indicated that if they want more detail, we are prepared to give it to them in any fashion that they ask. I would venture to say that the folks that we met with are most interested in continuing to do business with Alberta and Canada as it relates to buying our oil and gas. In fact, the people I talked to wish to buy more.

Monitoring of Oil Sands Tailings Ponds

Dr. Taft: Well, because of this government, Mr. Speaker, Albertans are reliant on self-reporting by companies in the oil sands for their environmental protection. Transparency International, a respected watchdog, gives ExxonMobil low marks compared to most of the energy industry for transparency and openness. ExxonMobil provides the management services for Syncrude Canada Limited. My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Since ExxonMobil is not open and transparent, and recognized not to be so, why is this government betting our environment on that very weakness?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've indicated before, self-reporting is only one part of the regulatory regime that we have. Monitoring is part of the condition of approval, and part of the monitoring is the reporting on behalf of the operator. There are also auditing provisions. There are spot checks done by our officials. It's part of the ongoing checks and balances that we also encourage the public to call in if they see problems occurring.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: does this minister trust ExxonMobil? Yes or no?

Mr. Renner: Mr. Speaker, I don't have to trust corporations that operate in Alberta. I have to expect and I do expect that they respect the laws of this land. It's not a case of trust; it's a case of public responsibility. It is their responsibility that if they operate in Alberta, they will abide by our laws.

Dr. Taft: Well, to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General: will this minister use her authority under the Public Inquiries Act to call for a public inquiry into the operations, liabilities, environmental impact, and long-term winding down of the oil sands tailings ponds?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that the question that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is asking is prompted by something that happened last week that was very unfortunate. We've taken all steps that we need to to investigate this, and appropriate action will be taken at the appropriate time.

The Speaker: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Midwifery Services

Ms Blakeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today marks the International Day of the Midwife, but despite the evidence and the growing demand this government has made it very clear that it is not interested in including midwifery services under health care. The government has helped with midwives' skyrocketing liability insurance costs, run umpteen pilot projects, and allowed that the primary care networks could hire midwives, but no coverage under health care. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Why is this government against including midwifery services in the public health care system?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, the profession of midwifery is going to play a very important role in the action plans of this government going forward. We have said on numerous occasions

that Albertans have to accept that there are different ways of accessing the health care system. I would ask the hon. member to watch as we unroll our health action plans and where midwifery fits into that.

Ms Blakeman: I've been watching 20 years, and so far zip.

Next question to the same minister: as midwifery services are not publicly funded, why is the minister discriminating against lower income women, who are excluded from a valuable and desirable service because they aren't able to pay for it?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, again, as I mentioned last week, we can talk about the past, or we can look to the future. While this particular member wants to talk about the past, that's fine, but we're looking to the future. In the days and weeks to come we will be rolling out some action around midwifery.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Blakeman: Well, thanks. To the same minister: given that the demand for midwifery services is soaring because hospitals are overwhelmed by capacity constraints and the recent spike in births, will the minister mandate that funding be available in each health region to fund midwifery services? It's less expensive, and it's in the future.

Mr. Liepert: Mr. Speaker, I only can say that as we roll out our health action over the next year, we will deal with midwifery. The hon. member will see what actions we're going to take at that time.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Sustainable Resource Development Inspectors

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Albertans are not getting the truth about environmental messes because there are simply not enough inspectors or investigators on the ground in Fort McMurray. Within days of the duck disaster last week we were hearing about a myriad of other wildlife deaths that are not being reported to the public. The Minister of Environment has waffled and avoided questions about where the inspectors are and what work they do because the truth is this: the government isn't doing much. My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier tell us how many Alberta Environment and SRD inspectors and other enforcement officials there were on the ground in the Fort McMurray region on the day that the ducks landed in the Syncrude tailings lake?

2:00

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, I promised in this House a full and thorough investigation of the incident. I also said that at the appropriate time, because one does not know what the future will hold, this investigation going forward, whether we're going to end up in a legal battle, a legal suit, that we're going to go through the investigation very carefully. We're going to learn from it. I'm sure Syncrude will learn from it, and so will the government. If we have to change things to ensure that this doesn't happen again, we will.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, it sounds like they're using that as an excuse to hide everything.

My question, then, is to the Minister of Environment. Can the Minister of Environment tell us how many full-time inspectors and

other enforcement officials his department has on the ground and had on the ground in the Fort McMurray region at the time of this incident?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't have the specific numbers at the top of my head. I'll be very pleased to supply those numbers to the member. I can tell members that when we discussed estimates on Wednesday night, I indicated that there are approximately 75 inspectors and about 25 investigators. Those numbers are plus or minus five. I can't remember for sure.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, a hundred for the whole province. The question really is: how many are based in Fort McMurray?

I'll ask the same question to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. How many officials from that minister's department were on the ground in the Fort McMurray region at the time of this disaster?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the risk of being rhetorical, I'd like to ask: how many government officials does it take to change a light bulb? Evidently, for the NDP there are never enough.

This government actually is proud of the fact that we worked closely with Environment in crafting the regulations, but instead of putting three or four different agencies on the ground there, one agency, the Department of Environment, is responsible for monitoring. If there's an incident like there was, the SRD officials come in and work with the fish or the wildlife, but we don't throw money away like our hon. friend.

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

Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Premier. Last week the Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute had an official opening. How will this institute fit into Alberta's health care system and Canada's health care system?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, last week Alberta was very proud to be home to a world-class heart institute right here in the capital city of Edmonton. It has drawn and will continue to draw world-class researchers and some of the finest skilled surgeons the world has to offer. Words are futile to express what you see in the faces of parents and loved ones when they see a baby or an adult recover from either a major, catastrophic heart attack or a malfunction. It's happening here in the capital city of Edmonton, and I tell you, we're all very proud of the accomplishments of not only the Capital regional health authority but all Albertans for putting this together.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only one supplemental question to the hon. Premier. The Mazankowski facility benefited from community fundraising. How much was raised by the community?

Mr. Stelmach: Mr. Speaker, this is the really good news. A

fundraising committee, that was chaired by Mr. Bill Comrie, assisted by Mr. J. R. Shaw and Mr. Dennis Erker, raised over \$45 million in additional funds. This came from donors not only within Alberta but across Canada contributing to the supply of additional equipment, equipment that is the latest technology. It's just fascinating. You can't explain the potential that we have in this province. As we heard earlier today, the Sikh community contributed over \$2.3 million to the healing garden, a very original concept in a heart institute of this sort. Again, considerable, unbelievable donations from the community at large.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Corrections Officers

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Gang violence is not only happening in our city streets, world communities, and native reserves, but it's also happening in our remand centres. This is evident from the attacks that occurred at the Edmonton Remand Centre this weekend. My question is: given that budget increases have been announced to provide for 65 new sheriffs in the new year and given the increases to Alberta's prison population, how many new remand guards will Albertans see in this period? That's to the Solicitor General, please.

The Speaker: The hon. Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security.

Mr. Lindsay: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to that, this particular year we're not planning any expansions to our correctional facilities, so we will add whatever members to corrections as are necessary.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also my understanding that the sheriffs recently hired to write traffic tickets receive a higher salary than correctional guards, some of whom have been working in our remand centres for quite some time. My question is for the Solicitor General. Given the violent situation in our prisons, will pay increases be forthcoming to these remand centre guards?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, this ministry certainly values the services that are provided by our probation officers, and we recently, just a few months ago, signed a new agreement with them. So we do believe that we are paying them fair compensation at this point in time.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some time ago corrections officers informed us that newly hired corrections personnel often receive a higher wage than members of staff who have been there for several years. Can the Solicitor General tell us whether this is still the case?

Mr. Lindsay: Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge that was never the case. There may be an instance where someone hired on a temporary basis, who already has previous experience, on a temporary contract may have received more money than a newly recruited and graduated corrections officer, but it's certainly not our policy to pay new members more than older members.

Monitoring of Oil Sands Tailings Ponds

(continued)

Mr. Dallas: Mr. Speaker, 500 ducks died last week when they landed on a tailings pond at Syncrude's oil sands mine north of Fort McMurray. This, of course, has raised questions about how this unfortunate event was monitored. My questions are for the Minister of Environment. Can he tell us what rules are in place to ensure that oil sands operators are effectively monitoring their operations on behalf of the people and wildlife that live in and around these industrial facilities?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, monitoring is indeed a condition of approval. When the approval is granted, there are conditions that are placed, many of which involve monitoring. Those conditions will vary depending upon the size of the operation, the higher potential for environmental impact, which would then entail more frequent requirements. But I have to emphasize that we don't rely solely on self-reporting. We also have compliance assessments, information audits, spot inspections, and constantly review our procedures and processes.

Mr. Dallas: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental question is for the same minister. Can the minister tell us what the requirements are to report incidents such as these and what action the government is taking to ensure timely and accurate reporting?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, timely reporting can certainly be a condition of approval, and failure to report or providing false information is considered a very serious offence. We ensure that the quality of our monitoring information is sound, and we will take immediate action to address issues affecting the reliability or credibility of that information.

Mr. Dallas: Mr. Speaker, my final supplemental question is for the same minister. Given what looks to be a serious breach of Syncrude's requirement to keep migratory birds off these tailings ponds, Albertans are concerned that the rapid pace of oil sands development is putting too much pressure on the environment and the systems in place to protect it. What is the minister doing to ensure that this is not the case?

Mr. Renner: Well, Mr. Speaker, we're dealing with this particular instance and taking it very seriously. The issue of new development and ongoing development is another instance of where it's so important that we begin to implement in a meaningful way the whole concept of cumulative effects because the way we deal with one tailings pond in isolation may well be different from the way we would deal with 15 or 20 similar kinds of installations. That's the essence of cumulative effect regulation.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

2:10 Seniors' Lodge Assistance Program

Ms Pastoor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2008 budget showed no planned increase in future targets for seniors' lodge assistance. The need for increases in funding to this area is echoed to us often, most recently by the Barrhead and District Social Housing Association. To the Minister of Seniors and Community Supports: when will the minister commit to increasing the funding allocated to this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Jablonski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member across is referring to the lodge assistance program. It now provides a grant of \$7.50 per day for the seniors that are low income. Also, if a lodge is requiring extra income, they can refer to the municipalities for a requisition. At this time we are providing \$16 million in this budget year for improvements to our lodges in Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Pastoor: Thank you. Costs will continue to rise in this economy. Will the minister commit to indexing the funding to match inflation, retroactive to 2005?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, we review our programs every year, and when we see that there's a need, we respond to that need.

Ms Pastoor: As the costs of personal responsibilities have increased to seniors, in Lethbridge lodges they tell me that the \$265 a month rule leaves them with less and sometimes no money. Will the minister commit to increasing the amount of money retained per month by seniors who live in lodges?

Mrs. Jablonski: Mr. Speaker, in our legislation we agree that we need to provide some money for seniors to have outside of their lodging and their food, so we do mandate that they have \$265 per month. I would undertake to have a look at that amount. I'm hearing differing stories from different people on whether it is enough or not.

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

Emergency Public Warning System

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Edmonton Police Service attempted to use the emergency public warning system for an Amber Alert about a missing child, but the system did not activate. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. How can we ensure that the system functions well in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Danyluk: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're very glad that the child was found. Good work by the Edmonton police.

The emergency public warning system serves Albertans very well. There are many components to the Amber Alert system. The public warning system is only one of them. Mr. Speaker, the public warning system not being activated is very concerning. Alberta Emergency Management is in the process of investigating the police attempts to activate the system, and I'd like to say that we work together with the police and CKUA and the Solicitor General.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: can Albertans still have confidence in the emergency public warning system?

Mr. Danyluk: Mr. Speaker, absolutely. The government of Alberta is committed to providing an effective public warning system, a partnership between law enforcement, the government, and the media. Our warning system is the only province-wide emergency

public warning system in Canada, and it's the only Amber Alert system in Canada that is linked to the public warning system. We have issued 55 warnings since 1992, its inception, and five Amber Alerts since 2002.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhardwaj: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last supplemental to the same minister: is the emergency public warning system tested on a regular basis, and if it is, how often?

Mr. Danyluk: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is tested on a regular basis. In fact, live tests are done quarterly, and the silent testing is done daily. The silent testing means that the testing is being done without it coming across the television screen. We also train approximately 900 individuals to be able to use that system, and after every Amber Alert the AEMA holds debriefings with the police, the Solicitor General, and all of the stakeholders to make sure that the system works and is adequate.

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

Kindergarten Programs

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2003, five years ago, the government's own Learning Commission recommended that junior and full-day kindergarten programs be phased in to help children get off to a good start in life and learning, particularly at-risk children. The Minister of Education said in the House recently that this recommendation is "one that I think bears looking at." To the Minister of Education: can the minister confirm, then, that over the last five years this government has not taken a serious look at implementing junior and full-day kindergarten programs?

Mr. Hancock: No, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member would know that there have been pilots around the province. I can refer to one specifically at St. Mary and St. Monica in my own constituency, where a junior kindergarten program has been in place. Some funding levels have been in place for it, and it's proven very successful for the children that have been involved in it. That's just one example of pilots that have happened across the province, and there's been very good work done in the area. There's been a lot of discussion, I know, from some of the zone areas for the school boards. So, no, he can't take that, and he probably even should be aware that there's good work happening in the area.

Mr. Chase: There is quite a difference between a pilot program and actual implementation.

To the Minister of Education: given that the trials of full-day kindergarten by the Edmonton public and Northern Lights school boards showed substantial progress for at-risk children, with a significant majority of participants achieving the same level of skill as other children, and given the minister's own testimonial, does the minister acknowledge that these programs are successful in helping at-risk children?

Mr. Hancock: I'm a bit confused, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member first asked whether we were looking at it and then in his second question demonstrates how, in fact, it has been looked at across the system. It has been looked at. There are successes coming out of it, and we very clearly need to be able to learn from those projects and determine how we can implement appropriate programs for at-risk

children across the province. That's part of the mandate that I have from the Premier and part of the job that I'm going to be accomplishing over the course of this year.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. It's time to move past piloting, past looking, past studying, and get on with the job.

The minister also said in the House that these programs are just one of the options and that a variety of tools need to be looked at. Instead of waiting for five more years while children miss out on critical learning, will the minister commit to implementing junior and full-day kindergarten programs as recommended by the government's own commission? We know that they work. Let's get on with it.

Mr. Hancock: Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, I have a mandate letter which asks me to take a look at how we can help at-risk students become successful. Certainly, junior kindergarten and kindergarten processes have been piloted across the province and show some efficacy in that regard, and we'll certainly be looking at them very closely as I fulfill the mandate that the Premier has given me.

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

Midwifery Services

(continued)

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is, as we have heard, the International Day of the Midwife, and while Alberta is in the midst of a baby boom, many families are struggling to understand why our province does not cover the services of midwives as part of medicare. While the government wrings its hands ineffectively at the shortage of doctors, the shortage of nurses, and the shortage of hospital beds, it ignores the fact that funding midwifery would ease pressure on each of these services. To the minister of health: when exactly will the government do the glaringly obvious and fund this service?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure there's much more that I can add because the question is very similar to one that came earlier in question period. Clearly, I believe that midwifery has a role to play in the delivery of health care, and it will be part of what we roll out going forward under our health action plan.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, for every year that we wait for more consideration and more rolling out and more pilot projects, I'm wondering if the minister can tell the Assembly how much more it is costing the health care system for women to deliver babies in hospitals with the assistance of a doctor than it would be at home with a midwife?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be judgmental to make that kind of an assessment. You know, it isn't every situation where midwifery can take place. All I can say is that we recognize the importance of the profession, and stay tuned.

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While it's not every situation where it would work, there are many situations where it would work, so I ask: why does this government continue to support a two-tiered, only the rich can choose model of health care services to women and their babies?

Mr. Liepert: Well, that's just an absurd comment, Mr. Speaker, written by researchers who – it's unfortunate that the member simply reads what's written for her. As we well know, the provincial government has been looking at the midwifery issue for some time. I acknowledge that we need to do a better job of integrating it into the system, but unlike our friends in the opposition, we're going to do this in an orderly manner rather than just making a decision on the spot.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Charitable Tax Credit

Mrs. McQueen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This question is for the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. Last week the government launched a very exciting and new community spirit program, that provides additional support to charities and nonprofit organizations across the province. Part of the program is an increased charitable tax credit for Albertans, which cost us \$80 million in revenue last year. Could the minister please explain where these dollars are coming from?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Speaker, the amount of money provided to charitable organizations through the community spirit program is determined by Albertans. The community spirit program is donor driven, and Albertans are giving a tremendous amount of their time and money to worthy causes like the Mazankowski Heart Institute. These contributions are a direct result of our province's healthy economy, which continues to grow.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. McQueen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have only one supplemental question, and that's to the same minister. In 2007, when many Albertans were unaware of the tax credit, this program cost our treasury \$80 million. Will our treasury be able to sustain this program if Albertans contribute even more?

Mr. Blackett: Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a very strong economy, made stronger by investments in businesses and communities across the province, including oil sands development. It's also worthy to note that in a conversation with the Auditor General last week he mentioned to me that for donations over \$200, Albertans will get a tax receipt for 50 per cent of that. Twenty-nine per cent of that comes back from the federal government. It's another chance for Albertans to claim some of the money that we're giving through our taxes to the federal government and to put it back into Albertans' hands in those 19,000 organizations for the betterment of us all.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Montrose.

Land-use Framework

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Sustainable Resource Development minister. For almost 15 years this government has said that it's committed to implementing

a comprehensive land-use strategy, yet still today we see no such plan, only a draft that concedes that Alberta's development has "reached the tipping point," to quote the minister, and that Albertans' quality of life will deteriorate if we keep going on the same path we are on today. To the minister: what specifically have been the barriers to implementing land-use frameworks over the last 15 years?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, my, what a short historical memory the members opposite have. Fifteen years ago what was the debt in this province? Fifteen years ago what was the state of the economy in this province? The government on this side has a proud legacy of cutting the deficit, killing \$24 billion worth of debt, putting the province back to work. It's a legacy everybody is proud of. Do we have some challenges today? Absolutely. But our challenges come from the success of the 14 years of the Klein government.

Dr. Swann: With respect, Mr. Speaker, I asked and will repeat the question. What are the barriers to implementing a land-use strategy for Alberta?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, again, at the risk of sounding like a professor, I'll point out that in periods of growth the leadership of this province has responded to the challenge. Premier Manning brought in the first land-use program in 1948, one year after the Leduc discovery. Peter Lougheed brought in the eastern slopes resource management in 1977, in the last big period of boom. The current premier, the hon. Premier, again following that tradition of timely responses, is now bringing forward a land-use framework.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you. I guess the answer was leadership.

To the minister again: given the unparalleled development and the amount of destruction in Alberta over the last 15 years, including environmentally sensitive areas like Kananaskis, Alberta's lakes, wetlands, loss of agricultural land, and now the oil sands, will the minister commit to at least slowing the development in these areas until the land-use framework is in place?

Dr. Morton: Mr. Speaker, I think we saw this movie last week. It was called *Stop the World – I Want to Get Off*. That works on Broadway; it doesn't work in the real world. We do have policies in place. We have the Water for Life policy, first amongst the provinces. We had our air policy updated again last year, a leader amongst the provinces, and this year we'll have a land-use framework that'll finish off that triad of policies that will make Alberta the leader in all of these environmental fields.

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

Midwifery Services

(continued)

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Michelle, one of my constituents, is passionate about midwifery, and today being the International Day of the Midwife, I ask the Minister of Health and Wellness: how do we presently support midwives?

Mr. Liepert: Well, Mr. Speaker, probably not as well as we should. What we do is we assist midwives with their liability insurance premiums. [interjection] You know, it's really interesting. It

doesn't matter with the hon. leader whether he asked the question or whether one of our members asked the question. He can't seem to wait for the answer. I'd ask him if he would just wait.

Mr. Speaker, we also run the college of midwifery, but as I said in answer to earlier questions, I think we need to do more.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the same minister. B.C., Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, the Northwest Territories fund midwifery. When are we going to step up and do this?

Mr. Liepert: Well, first of all, there's no question that funding for health care services across this country is a patchwork. There are things that we fund in this province that are not funded in the provinces that the hon. member referred to. However, what we want to do is ensure that we integrate midwifery services into our delivery model so that it becomes no cost to the patient, but we want to do that in a way that fits our total health delivery system.

Mr. Bhullar: Mr. Speaker, my last question is also to the Minister of Health and Wellness. The number of physicians providing maternity services, particularly labour and delivery services, is decreasing. Does he agree that by allowing midwives to play a larger role in the health care system, we could also help address the physician shortage?

Mr. Liepert: Well, there's no question about that, Mr. Speaker. That's why I believe that midwifery does play an important role in the delivery of the health system. We included midwives as part of our health workforce action plan, and we will be delivering on that plan over the course of the year.

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

Provincial Nominee Program

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are to the minister who is responsible for Alberta labour. Given that the provincial nominee program was slated to attract 2,500 new citizens to the province last year yet fell short of meeting its target by a thousand people – that's a 40 per cent shortfall in its target – can the minister explain this 40 per cent shortfall?

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

Mr. Goudreau: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier has mandated me to look at why those numbers are not any higher. We recognize that there's a strong role for those individuals under the provincial nominee program. We are continuing to work with the federal government to increase our numbers. We will see how we can change some of the processes here to ensure that our targets are met, that we do increase our numbers to the peak performance of the province.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how is it that Manitoba, a province with a much smaller population and a much smaller economy, can get well over 7,500

citizens on their provincial nominee program, yet you fail to meet your own government's targets?

2:30

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, we have different focuses, we take different directions, and we don't necessarily follow what the other provinces are doing. We have our own mandate to be able to service the employee-employer requirements in this province. We are continuing to increase our numbers, and, as I indicated, our targets are for continuous increases in the PNP program.

Mr. MacDonald: Again, Mr. Speaker, to the same minister: how long will it be before this government stops relying on the temporary foreign worker program, which clearly does not work, and tries to implement your own targets with the provincial nominee program, which works in Manitoba?

Mr. Goudreau: Mr. Speaker, the temporary foreign worker program has proven to be a very, very useful program in the province of Alberta. We use a combination of a lot of activities. First and foremost, we want to make sure that Albertans and those in Alberta that want to work have a chance to work and then, following that, any other Canadian, then the temporary foreign workers, of which a lot will eventually switch to the provincial nominee program.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Calgary Urban Campus Partnership

Mr. Fawcett: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week an information session was held at the University of Calgary regarding a proposed idea for an urban campus in downtown Calgary. The Calgary learning village has been hailed as a strong project to ensure access and efficiency in the postsecondary education system and to bring Calgary in line with many urban centres across the world. My question is for the Minister of Advanced Education and Technology. Is the minister committed to taking on the leadership role that is required to make this project move forward and gain approval?

Mr. Horner: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we are actually taking a leadership role in this project in a co-operative fashion. We encourage our postsecondaries to be innovative, creative, collaborative, co-operative in how they deliver projects, but we can't move ahead on a project until we know exactly what the detail of the programming is going to be. As I said last week in answer to this question, we don't believe this project is there yet. We don't yet know what the programming is. We don't yet know whether we're duplicating programming from similar institutions in the same facility. It's not about one institution or another; it's about making sure that we get it right.

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, my first supplemental is to the same minister. What are the specific issues that are keeping the Calgary learning village from being approved?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, last week, as I said, I had a very open and frank and productive meeting. I might add, with all of the chairs of Campus Alberta. That's all of the chairs of our postsecondary institutions. We agreed as a group that our system focuses on collaboration, on the benefit of Campus Alberta. That's why we need to make sure that we have the right partners involved, that we have the right programming involved. We have a number of strong projects in the Calgary region from our postsecondary institutions.

We need to make sure as we move forward that these programs are in the right place, that they're at the right time, in the right institution, and that they're funded appropriately.

Mr. Fawcett: Mr. Speaker, my final question to the same minister: when you consider that the city of Calgary has donated approximately \$20 million of land for this project, is the minister concerned that the city may have a potential expiration date on the use of this land?

Mr. Horner: Well, Mr. Speaker, to my knowledge the city has not confirmed a date or a termination date or a timeline to the land use of this project. It really is about being prudent with taxpayers' dollars, and I'm sure the city of Calgary would agree with that. It's all about appropriate planning for what's best for the postsecondary system. I'm sure the city of Calgary would agree with that. I'm sure the city of Calgary also wants what's best for the students in the Calgary region, as we do, and we're working with the postsecondaries to accomplish that.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

Highway 727

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our office has been contacted by residents of the Spirit River region who are concerned about the realignment of secondary highway 727. They have asked us to bring these concerns to the government. My questions are to the Minister of Transportation. What is the situation with regard to the realignment of secondary highway 727, sir?

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, the province of Alberta has committed to paving 727. The existing gravel alignment is very unstable, not appropriate for a paved highway. In fact, there are more than 25 slides a year there. When you have a minor slide on a gravel road, it's often a simple matter of regrading it, but that's not the case when you have a paved surface. For this reason the province is looking to build the highway on a more stable alignment so that it'll be built to last.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The local residents who contacted us feel that they have been left out of the process and their views ignored by the government. I would ask the minister if there have been any arrangements for additional public consultations.

Mr. Ouellette: Well, Mr. Speaker, the province has had four open houses there, during the planning stages of course, and in fact 80 per cent of those who attended the open houses supported the new alignment. There have been no changes to the alignment since these open houses were held. The new highway alignment is not only being built in a more stable way, but it will also be safer for motorists as the widening sections in the valleys will be eliminated.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Kang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Open houses are not consultation anyways.

These residents feel that the government has chosen an unnecessarily complex and expensive new route for the highway rather than simply upgrading the current route. Why is that?

Mr. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, upgrading on that current route would create ongoing problems. Instability and slides in the area would damage sections of 727 on an annual basis. We have those damages now. The department has worked closely with the community to develop and improve the alignment, that will be stable and safe, and we always stress safety in this province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, followed by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Random Dog Searches

Mr. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A recent Supreme Court decision states that random searches by highly trained canine units in our schools and other public places are now considered to be unconstitutional. This raises concerns that police may not be able to use random canine searches to combat drug trafficking. My question is to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. Given the Supreme Court's decision, will police still be able to use random canine dog searches in their fight against drug trafficking?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been in consultation with some ministers across the country as well as with my colleague the Solicitor General. The police will of course have to operate in accordance with the Supreme Court's recent ruling on the use of sniffer dogs. The court ruling is straightforward; however, the decisions are quite lengthy. They contain a number of separate judgments given by different judges and often conflicting with each other. One point the court was very clear on is that police can search for drugs in a bus depot if they have reasonable suspicion to do so. However, the courts could not agree on whether in this case the police had grounds for reasonable suspicion.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Anderson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. My only supplemental to the same minister: how will this affect random drug searches in schools?

Ms Redford: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is going to be an area where we're going to have to spend some time paying attention to the specific decision. My understanding from discussions that I've had is that there will be some ongoing work. However, we must respect the Supreme Court of Canada's decision, and we're going to have to reconsider how all of this happens.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

Crime Reduction and Safe Communities

Mr. Weadick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of this government's priorities is to promote strong and vibrant communities and reduce crime so Albertans feel safe. Yet it seems that every day we hear stories in the news about some pretty horrific crimes in Alberta communities, and many people, especially seniors in Lethbridge, are very concerned about their safety. My questions are to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General. The Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force released its final report in November. What, if any, actions have been taken to implement the recommendations?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I took on the responsibilities for this department, I was very excited to see that the Safe Communities Secretariat, which was launched in April, was going to come under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General. In concert with six other ministers who have departmental responsibilities that focus on safe communities, we are going to work through this task force to ensure that we're coming up with innovative, targeted approaches to make our Alberta communities safer and caring.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Weadick: Thank you. My first supplemental is to the same minister. How do we know that this is the best strategy to make Alberta's seniors and communities safer?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's very important and I think my colleagues here would recognize that when we're talking about safe communities, we're not just talking about a criminal element. We're talking about a lot of complicated social issues that generate a number of problems that make people concerned about how safe their communities are and whether or not we're living in a compassionate community. The work that the Safe Communities Secretariat is going to do is integrate approaches that many departments are starting to take on safe communities to make this a better province to live in.

Mr. Weadick: Again to the same minister. It's clear that sustaining safe communities is best served by a collaborative approach to fighting crime. How will you get this done?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Redford: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Safe Communities Secretariat, which will be housed in the Ministry of Justice, will involve co-operation between a number of departments. We've had a number of very successful meetings with people in the secretariat representing departments across government who've reached out to neighbourhoods and to community organizations to talk about what needs to be done. We're going to be proactive, and we're going to work hard, and we're going to act quickly.

The Speaker: Hon. members, that was 108, and in 30 seconds from now we will return to the Routine and Members' Statements.

Hon. members, might we revert briefly to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Mr. Oberle: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to recognize a constituent of mine who has joined us in the gallery, a great Albertan from a family of great Albertans. From a family business started over 50 years ago, they've grown a province-wide enterprise of 14 grocery stores, and they've built a corporation that believes in public service: one of the province's largest supporters of children's sports, a joint donor of a CAT scan machine to the Peace River hospital, and numerous other activities too numerous to

mention, in fact. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Mike Lovsin in the gallery. I'd ask him to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Human Rights

Ms DeLong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Millions of European Jewish men, women, and children were systematically put to death during the Holocaust by the Nazis and their collaborators. We recognized this dark time in our global history last week at the Alberta Legislature. However, other human atrocities continue today, even in our modern times, and this should occupy our thoughts as well. The Holocaust, the Ukraine famine, and events in Rwanda and in Darfur are reminders from the past and the present that the world is not free of tyranny and persecution.

Let us be thankful that we live in a province that embraces diversity, teaches acceptance, and promotes the right we all have to live without fear and without persecution. This includes a strong commitment to human rights.

I encourage everyone to reflect on other times of genocide and how we can make our communities safe and welcoming for all.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

Dutch Liberation Day

Mr. VanderBurg: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today marks a very special anniversary for all members of the Alberta Legislature who have Dutch heritage. Sixty-three years ago today Canadian soldiers liberated my family and millions of other Dutch citizens from the German occupation in Holland. Also on that date members of my family that were incarcerated in German work camps were freed and started their journey back to the Netherlands. The Dutch people both here in Canada and in the Netherlands have not forgotten this historic day and the Canadian soldiers who freed them.

Growing up as a son of Dutch immigrants, I learned at a very early age the importance of May 5, 1945. My parents would proudly fly both the Dutch and the Canadian flags to remind people in Whitecourt that the VanderBurg household had not forgotten.

Thank you.

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

Occupational Health and Safety

Mr. Elniski: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Time and time again Alberta businesses have proven they're up to the challenge of working alongside health and safety associations and with the government to make our workplaces safer. This success is highlighted during North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, which officially kicked off yesterday. I say "officially" because the Edmonton committee held its NAOSH speakers event last Wednesday, and as a member of the Canadian Society of Safety Engineering and a member of this Legislature I was pleased to attend this event and provide a few remarks on behalf of the government.

NAOSH events are being held across the province this week, events that raise awareness of the importance of workplace health and safety and, quite frankly, events that highlight how far this province has come, to the point of being among the top health and

safety leaders in the country. NAOSH Week is a great opportunity to focus on the many things that have been done right. Yes, there is room for improvement, but as one who has worked directly in the field of safety management, I am impressed by the dynamic industry-led initiatives and energetic health and safety association campaigns I see in Alberta. These are backed by a government that encourages and actively supports these initiatives along with enforcing what I strongly believe is one of the most encompassing and effective occupational health and safety acts in all of North America.

I encourage my Legislature colleagues and all Albertans to participate in the NAOSH events in your community and to show your support for those who successfully make Alberta one of the healthiest and safest jurisdictions to work in in the world.

Thank you.

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table a petition with 21 names stating that we petition the Assembly to urge the government to “commission an independent and public inquiry into the Alberta Government’s administration of . . . the Local Authorities Pension Plan, Public Service Pension Plan, and the Alberta Teachers’ Retirement Fund.”

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar. This petition reads:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to immediately abandon plans to increase the role of private insurance in the health care system, and instead, commit to strengthening the single-payer, public system.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mrs. Jablonski: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s my pleasure today to table five copies of the 2006-2007 annual report for the Premier’s Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The Premier’s council works to improve the lives of Albertans with disabilities by bringing forward to government the issues and concerns of persons with disabilities.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is the appropriate number of copies of a letter from a constituent of mine, Miss Barbara Bird, raising serious concerns about the Guzoo Animal Farm and the Discovery Wildlife Park and expressing her disappointment that the province has failed to enforce its regulations on animal welfare issues.

My second tabling is the appropriate number of copies of a report by a well-respected corporate watchdog called Transparency International. In this report they give a low grade to ExxonMobil for transparency.

My last tabling is paper copies of the blog of the Deputy Premier from his trip to Washington. These I’m tabling now because the blog site is no longer up and on the web.

Thank you.

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

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is an open letter on the crisis in the beef industry from Everett Tanis of Picture Butte.

My second tabling this afternoon is a series of letters written by constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar requesting that Alberta’s labour laws need to be changed, and they make suggestions on ways to improve the labour laws. The first letter is from Linda Witwicki. The second letter is from John Varghese. The third letter is from Michelle Hodson. The fourth letter is from Judith A. Dotimas. The last letter is from Lance W. Lowe.

Thank you.

2:50

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

Mr. Chase: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m tabling five copies of a program that I had the good fortune to attend called Light Up Papua New Guinea: The Captain Nichola Goddard Project. It was a gala fundraiser that was held in honour of Captain Nichola Goddard, who would have had her 28th birthday celebrated on Friday had she not been killed in the service of our armed forces in Afghanistan.

My second tabling represents the 41st annual pathway and river cleanup. The theme was Be a Hero. Three generations of the Chase family participated in the cleanup. We gave my dad a break because he was just coming out of heart surgery. Members of the Calgary-Varsity team were very much appreciated as we wandered the paths and along the river and cleaned up. Mr. Speaker, I noted that a similar cleanup took place here in Edmonton. Congratulations to all the associated volunteers.

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’d like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada calling on Alberta to provide publicly funded midwifery. The letter notes that in May of 2007 an expert panel in Alberta recommended fully funded midwifery as one way to improve the province’s poor record for low birth weights.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mrs. Jablonski, Minister of Seniors and Community Supports, pursuant to the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Governance Act the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Alberta Provincial Board annual report 2005-2006.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on a point of order.

Point of Order

Reflections on a Member

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today during question period the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona was asking questions of the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness with respect to the provision of midwifery services in this province. The

hon. member asked the question, “Why does this government continue to support a two-tiered, only the rich can choose [it] model of health care services to women and their babies?” In his response the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness made the comment that the question had been written for the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona by researchers.

Now, Mr. Speaker, to suggest that a member of this House is reading something that someone else wrote for them and is not expressing his or her own view I believe violates the standing orders of the House, specifically section 23(h), (i), and (j), and I want to put a particular emphasis on (i), that it “imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member.” In fact, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona did write her own question, and the words were her own.

Mr. Speaker, in looking into this, in *Beauchesne’s* 484(3) it says that “a Member will not be permitted by the Speaker to indulge in any reflections on the House itself as a political institution; or to impute to any Member or Members unworthy motives for their actions in a particular case.” I think that the suggestion made by the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness has the effect of demeaning the efforts of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona and belittling a very legitimate question which was truly a part of the great concern of that hon. member on this issue.

I would ask that the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness withdraw the remark and apologize to the member and to the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on this point of order.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to respond to this point of order. As you know, during the cut and thrust of question period oftentimes things are said that perhaps after the fact the member who said them expresses some regret. This certainly is the case in this particular instance. I am advised by the minister of health that, in fact, he did not mean to impugn anything in a negative manner against this member. If anything, he advised me that he was perhaps observing that it was a question that wasn’t of the usual high calibre that we’ve become accustomed to from this member since she’s joined us in this House. In any event, he wishes me on his behalf to withdraw the comment and apologize if the member took any offence to it.

The Speaker: Our tradition is that when an apology is extended, the recipient would accept this apology and we would move on. I take it that is the case today.

Mr. Mason: Absolutely and with appreciation.

Calendar of Special Events

The Speaker: Hon. members, last Wednesday I indicated to you that a number of members were offering congratulations or making mention in the House of certain events on a daily basis or a weekly basis that would occur in a particular month, and I indicated that on Thursday last I would bring to all members’ attention those special days or weeks in the month of May. Time did not permit that on Thursday last, but I am very, very pleased to do it today as three or four members already under Members’ Statements have given some recognition. May is a very, very intense month in terms of recognitions.

May is Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month, Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month, Museum Month, Red Shield Appeal Month, Speech and Hearing Awareness Month.

April 22 to May 19 is National Physiotherapy Month. April 27 to

May 3 was Education Week as it was also National Volunteer Week. April 28 to May 11 is March of the Living in Remembrance of the Holocaust.

May 1 to 7 is Spinal Health Week. May 1 to 7 is also National Summer Safety Week. May 2 was Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah. May 3 was World Press Freedom Day. May 4 was Hike for Hospice Palliative Care day.

May 4 to 10 is International Compost Awareness Week as it is Drinking Water Week as it is Emergency Preparedness Week as it is North American Occupational Safety and Health Week as it is Naturopathic Medicine Week.

May 5 to 11 is the Optimist Respect for Law Week. May 5, as we’ve heard today, is International Day of the Midwife. May 5 to 11 is Mental Health Week as it is National Hospice Palliative Care Week as it is Astronomy Week, with a culmination in Astronomy Day on May 12.

May 6 is World Asthma Day as it is International No Diet Day. May 8 is World Red Cross Day. May 10 is Kinsmen’s Raise the Flag Day. May 10 is also World Lupus Day as it is World Health Organization Move for Health Day.

May 11 is Mother’s Day. May 11 to 17 is Alberta Crime Prevention Week as it is National Police Week. May 12 is Fibromyalgia Awareness Day as it is Canada Health Day as it is International Nurses Day.

May 12 to 18 is National Mining Week as it is National Nursing Week. May 13 to 19 is National Road Safety Week. May 15 is International Day of Families. May 17 is International Day against Homophobia as it is United Nations World Information Society Day as it is World Telecommunication Day.

May 17 to 23 is North American Safe Boating Awareness Week. May 18 is International Museum Day. May 18 to 24 is Intergenerational Week as it is National EMS Awareness Week.

May 19 is Victoria Day. May 20 to 23 is Aboriginal Awareness Week. May 21 is World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. May 22 is International Day for Biological Diversity as it also a day associated with the provincial skills competition for the trades in the city of Calgary.

May 25 is National Missing Children’s Day as it is the World Partnership Walk day, with events in both Edmonton and Calgary. May 25 to 28 is the 14th Canadian skills competition for trades days. May 25 to June 1 is the Week of Solidarity with the Peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories. May 26 to June 1 is National Sun Awareness Week. May 27 is the Schizophrenia Walk of Hope day. May 29 is International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers, and May 31 is World No Tobacco Day.

Orders of the Day

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.

3:00 Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I’d like to call the committee to order.

Bill 201
Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? I'm going to call on the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure today to rise and start Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. I'm highly appreciative of the support I've received from both sides of the House on this bill.

I want to take a few moments to address a section laid out in the bill. Section 1(1) states: "A person has a right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law." Mr. Chairman, this part of Bill 201 supports the reference made to the Wildlife Act in section (2) of the bill. The Wildlife Act states under section 47(1): "A person shall not interfere with the lawful hunting of wildlife by another person, or with any lawful activity preparatory to such hunting, with the intention of preventing or impeding the hunting or the continuation of the hunting."

The right to hunt and fish and trap in this province is a right for all Albertans. It's a part of our heritage, and the activities themselves should not be, as the Wildlife Act states, interfered with. There are those who misunderstand the role these activities play in conservation, wildlife management, and the environment. The right to hunt, fish, and trap should not be prevented by anyone who simply doesn't appreciate the activities themselves. We cannot force our beliefs on one another, and we cannot force our opinions about hunting by impeding others who enjoy these activities lawfully.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 201 references the Wildlife Act because hunting, fishing, and trapping are a part of our heritage and also play a significant role in Alberta today. Respecting the rights of hunters to hunt supports the continuation of that tradition and also connects the tradition to other laws surrounding these activities. Section 47(2) of the Wildlife Act says, "A person shall not disturb, or engage in an activity that will tend to disturb, wildlife with the intention of preventing or impeding its being lawfully hunted." This part of the Wildlife Act is aimed at stopping people who choose to act upon their own preferences regarding hunting, fishing, and trapping to try and stop the activities from occurring by doing such things as standing in the line of fire, harassing hunters, or attempting to affect wildlife behaviour with smells, sights, or sounds designed to hinder hunters. Bill 201 reinforces that this type of interference is unlawful. At the same time it supports the continuation of the tradition and the benefits of wildlife management activities now and into the future.

The next section of the Wildlife Act that is supported by Bill 201 is section 47(3).

A person shall not disturb another person who is engaged in the lawful hunting of wildlife, or in any lawful activity preparatory to such hunting, with the intention of dissuading that person from hunting or otherwise preventing the hunting or of preventing that person's enjoyment of the outdoors.

Some of the problems faced by hunters, trappers, or fishermen may include unco-operative landowners or leaseholders. This is not to say that these unco-operative individuals may not be this way because they've had to deal with people who have accessed their land for recreation and have abused that privilege. Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development has set out easily accessible information on their website concerning allowing hunters access to lands for recreational purposes. They should not be dissuaded from carrying out these activities, as section 47(3) of the Wildlife Act states. In order to provide hunters, fishers, and trappers the right to perform these activities, some rules need to be established around who and how and where they could access land to do so.

In 2003 the Alberta government clarified the rules for recreational and exploration access on agricultural dispositions issued under the Public Lands Act. The Public Lands Act balances the needs of the leaseholders to protect the land and livestock from harm with the rights of the recreational users for reasonable access. Mr. Chairman, its aim is encouraging communication, co-operation, and, most importantly, respect.

The rules include that the recreational user must contact leaseholders before accessing land. The purpose of the contact is to provide leaseholders with information about the visit and how the visit could impact their operation. As well, leaseholders can provide the recreational user with additional information about the land. Recreational users are required to provide the leaseholder with the type of recreation they intend to do, the time and location, the number of people in the group, and perhaps even their names and phone numbers as well as the licence plate numbers of their vehicles.

Those who use the land for recreation must take all their litter with them when they leave, park their vehicles away from entrances, refrain from lighting fires, close gates if that's how they were when they entered, and not damage the property. Under the Public Lands Act recreational users or leaseholders who contravene provisions related to that recreational use may be subject to a fine of up to \$2,000, or the minister may require an administrative penalty be imposed. Recreational users should also use similar guidelines if they wish access to private lands to hunt, fish, and trap. Respectful, open, and honest communication will make the experience a good one for everybody.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 201 reinforces the right of Albertans to partake in the activities of hunting, fishing, and trapping, but the legislation that already exists still applies. The rules around how to do these activities within the scope of the law are determined by the Wildlife Act. To do them peacefully and with respect is not only encouraged but is further facilitated by the Public Lands Act.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping have evolved from providing subsistence to providing sport and conservation. One part of these activities that has remained throughout our heritage is using respect when accessing land and communicating with those who'll be affected by your activity. It is necessary to protect the rights of all Albertans, including those who hunt, fish, and trap, and also to ensure that everyone involved is not taken advantage of. Mr. Chairman, having the freedom to practise the traditions of our heritage is not only important; it's also imperative for conservation and wildlife management.

I look forward to additional debate on this bill, and I'll be prepared to answer any questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

3:10

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. The member knows very well that I supported his motion last year on recognizing the historical significance of hunting, fishing, and trapping. He's sort of taking some of the thoughts or momentum from that motion and turning it into a bill, but I don't see the need for a bill that basically echoes already established hunting land access usage under the Wildlife Act. Basically, this is just an echoing of what's already established, so I don't see the need.

I've done a fair amount of extensive hunting and fishing, primarily with my father, and we always were respectful. We noticed land signs that were posted. My father also received a number of awards from the province, including a centennial medal, and from Alberta

Fish and Game he's received a number of awards. Probably the one that was most important to him was the Order of the Bighorn for his conservation efforts and habitat restoration efforts. My dad singlehandedly has planted thousands upon thousands of caraganas, for example, to establish windbreaks around sloughs and ponds to encourage waterfowl to nest and continue in the areas.

As I say, growing up, it's been my experience – and enjoyable experience at that time – having the opportunity to hunt and fish and trap. I don't recall under any of the circumstances anybody jumping up in front of me and saying, you know, "Don't shoot that mallard," or "That snow goose has inalienable rights," and therefore . . . [interjection] Yes, I do. In my past I have, and I've eaten them and thoroughly enjoyed the wild game.

But, as I say, I've never had somebody jump up in front of me like a jack-in-the-box and tell me that I couldn't do that. Of course, I always operated in a safe manner. I followed all the safety rules. When I first started hunting, I went through a hunters' safety program in Ottawa. Where I found the most difficulty wasn't with individuals opposed to hunting; it was some of the attitudes of hunters themselves or their own lack of safety. For example, I can remember rowing out to a series of reeds to potentially use as a blind for hunting. It was pitch dark. All you could hear were wings, and my father said, "Hit the deck." This is something we'd established, and I hit the deck. Sure enough, pitch black, the early morning sky was lit up with shotgun flashes, and the pellets bounced off the side of our aluminum boat. But there weren't any protesters. There wasn't anybody dressed up as a polar bear or wearing any other type of costume suggesting that we shouldn't be hunting.

Based on my father's reputation we were welcomed on a number of land areas. Soderghen Farms is a place where my dad has continued to enjoy the opportunity to hunt deer. However, having said that, landowners also have the right to determine who should and shouldn't have access to their land. It's great, you know, if the individuals establish a relationship with the landowner, but they shouldn't absolutely expect to have access to that land.

While the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat with this bill is talking about extending and promoting the opportunities to hunt, fish, and potentially trap, the reality of the practice in this province from, for example, sustainable resources is to not limit the number of access roads that go into certain areas that basically add to easier access for predators. They would rather, it seems, shoot young wolves or poison them, although there seems to be a revisiting of the poisoning aspects for wolves, and it's all supposedly in the name of preserving elk and caribou. Every time another forestry road pierces an area, another seismic road, another extraction road, that just means that the natural predators basically are given superhighways. And who can blame them? However, nature has a habit of balancing out. Certain species, being dependent on species lower down on the chain, can only exist if they have food or prey upon which to subsist.

With regard to this particular bill, again, this government has suggested restrictive ideas, such as the open spaces. It is suggesting that only certain people be allowed onto certain public lands and is a big push towards having American game hunters come up and use publicly owned lease land, pay the individual who is leasing that land. Then, based on their ability to pay, they would be able to hunt. This is in absolute contravention to this proposal, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, Bill 201. Now, the Alberta Fish and Game Association unanimously voted against the concept of open spaces. The Alberta Fish and Game Association, other organizations like Alberta Wilderness Association, and so on have expressed concerns about the way wildlife has basically been mismanaged in this province.

What we have on one side is a bill echoing the Wildlife Act,

which is already in force, and as far as I know, the only thing that would keep it from being enforced is the shortage of wildlife officers. You've heard me speak about the lack of forestry, fishery, and conservation officers to enforce the act. Well, rather than having a bill, I would suggest, let's hire more individuals who can provide that necessary enforcement.

Alberta is basically under threat, and that threat comes primarily from industrial exploitation. I've talked about the Suffield range. I've spoken about the intrusion into the wildlands areas that the woodland caribou inhabit. This government seems to have difficulty deciding which species it's all right to shoot from helicopters, whether it be wolves or deer, using CWD as an excuse for this kind of practice, yet this government has encouraged individuals to get into the game ranching business, whether it be elk or deer. Of course, there has been great debate as to whether it's the wild animals that brought the CWD, but there's considerably greater research that would indicate it was herds of uninspected animals that came up to us through the States that brought the chronic wasting disease here.

The government can't have it both ways. It can't say, "Yes, we recognize not only the historical rights, but we would like to bring those historical rights into 2008" and then say: "But we'd like to interfere with the process. We won't consider grizzlies an endangered species. We won't cut out certain poisoning methods. In fact, we as a government will continue to use those poisoning methods," unjustified as they are, "to control wolves."

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

3:20

Dr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to join Committee of the Whole on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. I have spoken to the bill earlier, in debate on second reading, and I'm pleased to make some further remarks this afternoon in committee.

Mr. Chairman, as I mentioned earlier, hunting, fishing, and trapping certainly have a proud history in the province of Alberta. They're part of our heritage as a province and as a people, starting with the aboriginal people, moving through the Métis, fur traders, European settlers. As I mentioned earlier, my great grandparents, when they came to Alberta from the Saskatchewan area in 1883, brought 16 guns and a lot of gunpowder with them as part of their essential tools for life on the frontier.

As the population increased in our province and as the exploitation of wildlife began to increase, there was a need for additional regulation. I think that right now we have a model of responsible wildlife conservation in the province of Alberta, and I think that hunting and fishing are carried out in a very responsible way, with the best interests of the conservation of the wildlife and with managing the harvest in a very responsible and scientific way.

Mr. Chairman, I think it's important to point out, as the bill does in its preamble, that hunters, anglers, and trappers are very instrumental in maintaining the conservation and the management of Alberta's fish and wildlife resources. It's quite often the people who are enjoying the resource in a way which is very tangible who are the most committed to the preservation of those animals, and I think that that certainly is the case with the hunters and fishermen. They recognize the importance of maintaining the wildlife and maintaining the habitat which supports the wildlife.

I would like to specifically point out some of the many, many groups that support the sustenance of our fish and wildlife resources in the province of Alberta. I'd like to speak to one in particular, Mr.

Chairman, if I could, and that is the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep. This foundation is primarily concerned with the restoration and conservation of wild sheep populations. We have a chapter which is active here in the province of Alberta, the Alberta chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, which is primarily concerned with preservation, of course, of our bighorn sheep, the Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep being the official mammal of the province of Alberta and recognized in our legislation as such.

The foundation, through the funding of many programs, supports research on the management of the bighorn population. It annually funds a number of specific projects, reviews grant applications. One of the projects that the foundation committed their funds to was the Yarrow-Castle bighorn sheep study, which had some important implications for future management of the population. That study was entitled: addressing a recent population decline. It talked about the limiting factors of the bighorn sheep population in the Yarrow-Castle region. It showed that the decline in the population in that specific area was primarily due to pneumonia but that the population has been improving steadily, with an increase especially after 1996.

There were also some changes that came about, as a result of studies like that study, in the wildlife management practices. The first was a restriction in the front-range canyons by restricting motorized access to the areas. The second was by changing the legal restrictions on trophy rams from a four-fifths curl to a full curl. Generally, for those of you who are not sheep hunters, a four-fifths curl means an animal that is somewhere around five years or younger and then a full curl would be generally six years or older. That would allow some of the age groups that could be legally hunted to be kept viable in the population and allow the population to continue to increase.

Mr. Chairman, the essence of Bill 201 is that hunters and fishermen and trappers enjoy these activities. They are knowledgeable about conservation and value our wildlife. I am sure that the hon. members in the Chamber would agree that the avocation of hunting and fishing and trapping is not only an important part of our heritage here in the province of Alberta, but it's also a very important part of who we are at this present time. It's to be expected and hoped that with proper conservation and proper wildlife management practices this is an endeavour which can continue for many generations into the future. I believe that Bill 201 acknowledges and promotes that role and the role that hunters and fishermen and trappers play in the resource, and I urge all hon. members to give their support to Bill 201 in committee.

The Chair: I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mrs. Leskiw: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. Being married to a hunter and fisherman and having raised a son who loves to hunt and fish, I am pleased to speak on behalf of this bill.

Bill 201 recognizes the importance of hunters, anglers, and trappers in Alberta. It recognizes the right to hunt, fish, and trap in accordance with the law. This right is upheld within both federal and provincial legislation. Section 1(2) of the bill details the legislation enacted by each government. The Wildlife Act, the Fisheries Act, the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, and the respective regulations detail the privilege that is granted to every Albertan. These laws govern hunting, fishing, and trapping in our province and how outdoor enthusiasts who partake in the activities must follow the guidelines within them. Mr. Chairman, the rules

and regulations put forth better serve the province by protecting and maintaining Alberta's wildlife. Without direction outdoorsmen and women could inadvertently cause irreversible harm to certain species.

One of the species considered in our conservation practices are migratory birds. Under the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994, the government of Canada decided to protect numerous species of birds considered in the act. Under this act migratory birds are those birds that in the course of their annual migration transfer through certain parts of Canada and the United States.

Beginning with the convention between the United States and the dominion of Canada in 1916, the Legislature put forth that migratory birds play an important role in maintaining the ecosystem of our continent. They were found to be of great value as a source of food or in destroying insects that can harm forests, plants, and crops. Almost a hundred years later the value of migratory birds is still highly regarded and regulated. They are held with such utmost value that the penalty upon conviction or indictment can result in a maximum fine of \$1 million and three years in prison.

The principles within the convention were revisited in 1995 to update the effective action taken to improve conservation practices. This became known as a protocol between the United States and Canada that reaffirmed their commitment to the purpose and objectives of the 1916 convention. The protocol made some additions to its lists of migratory bird species and whether the bird is game or not. Because of this, hunters are given sufficient knowledge on which birds they are able to hunt. The treaty also highlights when the activity is allowed to take place. Under section 1 the closed season for migratory game birds is between March 10 and September 1.

3:30

Mr. Chairman, the protection of migratory birds within this protocol reflects the purpose of Bill 201. The commitment and desire to protect our wildlife is the fundamental value instilled in our outdoorsmen and women. These conservation principles are embedded within the Migratory Birds Convention Act of 1994. Article II states that these principles should be followed: to manage migratory birds internationally, to ensure a variety of sustainable uses, to sustain healthy migratory bird populations, to restore depleted populations of migratory birds. It also highlights the many means to pursue the principles necessary through monitoring, co-operation and partnership, education and information, incentives for effective stewardship, protection of incubating birds, designation of harvest areas, and so on.

These principles of conservation and protection are also embedded within Bill 201. Section 1 of the bill states that "a person has a right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law." Mr. Chairman, Bill 201 encourages the safe practice of these privileges. In order to ensure that conservation practices are handled in a responsible manner, Bill 201 points out that regulation plays a key role. Section (2) of the bill promotes working in accordance with regulations necessary to conserve and protect our migratory bird population. It highlights the practice of conservation and protection of all wildlife. In order to do so, these regulations within the Migratory Birds Convention Act also enable us to respond to variables that may affect those species. The improvement made by the act reflects upon our attitudes toward hunting.

Through regulations the Lieutenant Governor in Council can limit the number of migratory birds a person can hunt, capture, or take in any period. This will help to increase or decrease any migratory bird population that becomes problematic in the ecosystem of our surrounding inhabitants. For example, if a disease or other ailment

befalls a specific group, it may be deemed that for the greater good of the species those infected be removed from the area. Thus it would be prudent to capture, move, or claim more of that species during a period of time, but this would only be considered when another course of action does not present itself.

Mr. Chairman, as I've previously mentioned, Alberta's appreciation of wildlife is exemplified in Bill 201. Our hunters, fishers, and anglers have a tradition of wildlife conservation and protection. Section (2) of the bill references laws that each individual must abide by in order to carry out those outdoor activities. With respect to our migratory birds we have seen that these species are given the utmost consideration under section (2) of the proposed bill. These guarantee that Albertans are allowed to participate in hunting certain species of birds along with when, where, and how to properly carry out this tradition. By doing so, it can foster long-term protection for migratory birds and establish the rights of people throughout Alberta to properly administer these conservation practices.

Mr. Chairman, I believe Bill 201 promotes the right to practise the tradition of hunting, fishing, and trapping, and that is why the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat should be commended for bringing this bill forward.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Berger: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It gives me great pleasure to stand up and add another voice as well as that of the Alberta Conservation Association in support of Bill 201. The Alberta Conservation Association is a nonprofit, nongovernmental association that works collaboratively to conserve, protect, and enhance our natural biological resources. Evolving originally from the Alberta fish and wildlife trust fund, the ACA is now governed by a board of directors represented by conservation groups, science, and the public at large. With the board's direction the ACA's managing director oversees approximately 70 highly trained staff working across the province.

The ACA is a delegated administrative organization under the Alberta Wildlife Act. Their business is conservation; their product is information. The ACA is a nonpartisan and nonregulatory body. The ACA's two major business areas consist of on-the-ground project delivery and administering our grant-eligible conservation fund. On-the-ground projects are grouped into three main business areas: fisheries, habitat, and wildlife. The ACA is responsible for managing the costs while maintaining scientific credibility and excellence as cornerstones in the services they deliver.

The vision of the ACA is an Alberta where there is good stewardship of our natural biological resources, where habitats are maintained and improved, and where people work together so that future generations can value, enjoy, and use those resources. Mr. Chairman, I believe that is exactly what Bill 201 will enhance and carry to future Albertans once it is passed.

What does the ACA do? Annually the ACA focuses several million dollars towards conservation efforts, delivering a wide variety of projects, programs, and services across the province in the areas of research and data collection, hands-on project delivery, monitoring, analysis and evaluation, program funding, facilitation, and collaboration of stakeholders. Their funding, Mr. Chairman, is received from a variety of Alberta conservationists, including significant contributions from hunters, anglers, and a growing group of corporate partners. Every time hunting or fishing licences are purchased, the ACA receives a portion of those funds to allocate into important conservation projects.

Some of the specific programs that they are involved in currently

are the enhanced fish stocking program and the wildlife program. The enhanced fish stocking program was initiated to provide the Alberta angler with an enhanced angling experience while maintaining the integrity of Alberta's natural waters and fish populations by stocking larger rainbow trout, a minimum of 20 centimetres. The stocking of rainbow trout enhances and increases fishing opportunities for Albertans by providing the opportunities to catch rainbow trout in areas of the province where they would otherwise not exist. In 2007, 131,000 rainbow trout 20 centimetres and over were stocked into 60 water bodies, including one in my own constituency, a little pond in the town of Granum where campers and recreationists kind of hang around all weekend and fish. There are lots of kids out there. It's a great opportunity to bring more anglers on into the future. It's a good family experience.

Mr. Marz: What's the name of it?

Mr. Berger: The name is Granview park in Granum, Alberta.

The wildlife program, and more specifically the recreational opportunities program area, develops and supports opportunities that enhance consumptive and nonconsumptive wildlife-related recreational experiences for all Albertans.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to add my voice and the voice of the ACA to the support of Bill 201, and I would encourage all members to support Bill 201. Thank you.

The Chair: I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Strathcona.

Mr. Quest: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, brought forth by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. It's very important that we recognize the heritage of hunting, fishing, and trapping in Alberta and honour the rights that they have in our province. That is what we will do by passing Bill 201. With Bill 201 we are doing much more than recognizing our past. Rather, we are acknowledging the future of these activities and the importance they still have for Albertans today.

3:40

Mr. Chairman, in the preamble of Bill 201 it is mentioned that hunting, fishing, and trapping have played important roles in shaping Alberta's social, cultural, and economic heritage. I don't think that any of the hon. members present today would disagree with this. It's important that we ensure that these activities continue to play their roles and do not become activities of the past. We must protect the rights of Alberta's hunters, fishermen, and trappers and secure their future. In fact, there are many organizations in Alberta who have been working hard for many years, ensuring that the experiences hunters, fishers, and trappers felt many years ago can still be enjoyed in the future.

One such organization, Mr. Chairman, is the Alberta Fish and Game Association, AFGA. The AFGA is a volunteer-based, not-for-profit, charitable organization that advocates for the common interests of Alberta's hunters, fishermen, and trappers. They very much believe in the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping not only as an important part of Alberta's history but as a participant in our society, economy, and culture. The AFGA recognizes the environmental stewardship that these groups of Alberta outdoorsmen exhibit and ensures that the rights, experiences, and passions of hunters, fishermen, and trappers are presented with a bright future.

AFGA does more than just protect rights, though. They work

extensively with the government of Alberta, helping to manage our natural environments in order to continue the significance these activities weigh with Albertans. AFGA operates numerous programs such as membership services, educational scholarships, reports on sensitive issues, and the wildlife trust fund volunteer stewardship program, all services that promote sustainable interaction with our environment. Mr. Chairman, I mention the AFGA because they believe, just like the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, that hunting, fishing, and trapping contribute to the social, cultural, and economic construction of Alberta.

AFGA has been active for over 90 years and now has a total membership exceeding 16,000 members, including approximately 100 fish and game clubs in over 100 Albertan villages, towns, and cities.

Mr. Chairman, to say that the members of AFGA have worked tirelessly over the years is a dramatic understatement. Since 1984 AFGA members have volunteered the equivalent of approximately 17,858 man-days. This is comparable to 18 staff-years, or 142,864 hours, of protecting the rights and the environments that Alberta hunters, fishers, and trappers enjoy today. They understand the importance these activities not only had in our past but have in our future, and they understand that hunting, fishing, and trapping have a special place in the hearts of Albertans. Therefore, similar to the intentions of Bill 201 the AFGA advocates for promoting and understanding and recognition of the important activities of Alberta's heritage that we still have today.

The AFGA is a very well-respected organization, and simply put, it supports Bill 201 with open arms. In fact, as stated by the AFGA website, the organization believes it to be "more than just symbolic" as it creates a statutory right to hunt, fish, and trap that can be defended in court and helps secure the future of these time-honoured acts in Alberta. In the words of AFGA, Mr. Chairman, the organization "couldn't be happier" with the proposed bill. I think this speaks for itself. An organization which has experienced first-hand the stigma hunters, fishers, and trappers experience should surely know the importance the recognition of their rights has in securing their passions for many years to come in the future.

I offer the hon. members present today to think upon the experiences they've had hunting, fishing, or trapping in their lifetime. Imagine if you were unable to have those experiences with your family or friends because your rights were challenged and not upheld. My own experience fishing in the North Saskatchewan River with my son, your chance to snag that 12-point buck on the open prairie, or the opportunity to pass along the traditional ways of trapping to your children: it would be a real tragedy, Mr. Chairman, if these opportunities were threatened in any way.

I believe Bill 201 is about the rights of Alberta's hunters, fishers, and trappers. It's critical that we ensure that the social, cultural, and economic significance these activities play in our province continue well into the future. Any attempt to further enshrine the rights would be wholeheartedly welcome. Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I will vote in favour of Bill 201.

Thank you.

The Chair: Now to recognize the hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Mr. Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join the Committee of the Whole in discussing Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. Bill 201 is important for current and future hunters, anglers, and trappers, Albertans in general, and the wildlife that inhabit our natural areas. Such is stated in the first preamble point, which reads: "Whereas hunting, fishing and trapping

have played important roles in shaping Alberta's social, cultural and economic heritage." It is also important in that it promotes awareness of the value of our natural habitats, their preservation, and proper management. These goals are clear in the preamble of the bill, which outlines the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping in, one, our heritage; two, our understanding of conservation and wildlife management; and three, the value of best traditions for future generations.

The personal right to hunt, fish, and trap in accordance with the law is reinforced in section 1, thereby ensuring the active promotion of these goals. Many individuals and families in Alberta are active in the outdoors with many hunting, fishing, and/or trapping as well. They are part of the long-standing appreciation for nature and are important advocates for its preservation.

Many organizations, Mr. Chairman, also play an important role and have as their mandate the promotion of wildlife management and habitat preservation, as we have heard. One such organization of prominence which I would like to recognize and discuss is the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society, or APOS. It is APOS's belief that fish and wildlife contribute to the quality of life of Albertans and that Albertans want to ensure that fish and wildlife continue to have a secure place in the future of the province. They believe that careful management and collaboration are crucial to sustaining our natural habitats and their animal populations.

Their stated mandates are as follows:

- Protecting Alberta's fish and wildlife [populations] through effective legislation, regulation and enforcement programs;
- Assessing the status of fish and wildlife populations and managed species to ensure populations are sustained.
- Developing regulations, provincial management plans and management programs for recreational hunting, trapping, outfitting-guiding, game farming and wildlife in captivity.

APOS holds an annual local convention where funds are raised for their legacy fund, which is used to support conservation projects that preserve the rights of hunters, anglers, and trappers in Alberta consistent with section 1 of the bill, Mr. Chairman. APOS typically has raised around a hundred thousand dollars each year for the fund since its inception in 2000, a commendable achievement.

Many local conservation programs and awareness campaigns depend on such funding from APOS and other similar organizations. The many recent grants provided under the legacy fund show just how important a role APOS plays. For example, the central east slopes wolf study and elk study received funds for its project, which was aimed at developing a methodological approach for improved wildlife management intended for immediate application.

Funding was also provided for the Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation, whose vision is stated as follows: "Hunting continues to be a respected, traditional outdoor activity that remains a substantial and integral part of Alberta's heritage, culture and environment." Their stated mission, for which APOS provides funding, is "to foster and increase public understanding, involvement and support of hunting. To ensure opportunities for every Albertan to hunt within a management system that conserves the wildlife resource." Their mission and the vision that motivates it could not be more consistent with the goals of Bill 201, Mr. Chairman.

It is evident that many Albertans are committed to many values entrenched in hunting, fishing, and trapping. APOS also provides funding to engage youth in outdoor activities such as the Outdoor Youth Seminar, thereby fostering appreciation for nature and its many bounties among our future leaders. They sponsor Camp Fish'n Around, which enables city youth in need, aged eight to 14 years, to become involved in the outdoors. The project is aimed at teaching the youth about wildlife and fish habitat, conservation, trapping, and outdoor survival skills.

APOS has also renewed funding for the conservation education manuals used by the conservation and hunter education program. They are a general educational tool that promotes safe, responsible use of the outdoors, thereby fostering appreciation for hunting, fishing, and trapping as primary outdoor activities.

APOS has also supported research efforts such as the Sherwood Park based project using big game herd data to set harvest quotas. The stated objective of this project was to ensure sustainable long-term yields from big game herds in Alberta, for which quota harvest policies are used. Collaboration with fish and wildlife biologists allowed best-practice sharing, which is ever important for effective wildlife management.

Finally, APOS also funds politically oriented groups that seek to educate the public and liaise with the government to encourage effective laws and legislation with regard to wildlife and habitat management. One such group that APOS provided funding for was the Public Action for Wildlife Society, or PAWS. Bill 201 is indeed consistent with their mandate.

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to outline mandates and initiatives of the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society and the many causes they support. APOS and other organizations that support the tradition of hunting, fishing, and trapping and effective wildlife and habitat management in Alberta should be a point of pride for all Albertans. The three statements in the preamble of Bill 201 are consistent with and lend much credence to the virtue of organizations like APOS. Section 1 of Bill 201 also secures Albertans' right to participate in these groups' causes by affirming the right to hunt, fish, and trap. I commend the stated intentions of Bill 201 as it empowers organizations like APOS to continue our traditions of hunting, fishing, and trapping in a safe and responsible way.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3:50

The Chair: I would like to recognize the hon. Minister of Energy.

Mr. Knight: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is indeed a pleasure for me to speak this afternoon with respect to Bill 201. I certainly want to make appropriate comments, and kudos to the member for bringing this piece of legislation forward.

One thing about it is that you don't very often find a piece of members' business, particularly a private member's bill, that generates a lot of very positive and enthusiastic response from our constituents, but this piece of legislation has done exactly that. The other thing that I think is worth while pointing out is that this is the kind of legislation that Albertans would really appreciate. This whole piece of legislation is done on one single sheet of paper: very clear, very easy to understand. It gets to the core of a problem that we have been wrestling with for some time, and that is that there has been, I think, over a period of years, certainly, a lot of roadblocks beginning to appear with respect to the ability of Albertans to pursue hunting as either a sport, a pastime, or in certain circumstances an augmentation of their food supply, so the right that people have to hunt, fish, and trap.

I would also like to just take a minute or two to explain that the situations that are dealt with here are not relative to only individual Albertans from the point of view of private pursuit with respect to the issues. I believe, with respect to trapping and fishing, that we do have commercial enterprises in the province of Alberta that, in my opinion, are extremely important to Albertans from the point of view of the links that they have to our heritage and, certainly, the opportunities for the management and control and the conservation of the species involved. These individuals and groups such as the

Alberta Trappers Association and the Alberta Commercial Fishermen's Association I think play a tremendous role with respect to conservation of species that they're interested in. Again, this piece of legislation really very simply fortifies their right to be engaged in a commerce that we believe is important in Alberta.

Again, I just want to thank the member for bringing this forward, Mr. Chairman, and I thank you for the opportunity to make comments with respect to the bill.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to recognize the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Mr. Weadick: Well, good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is a pleasure to rise and debate Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. This is a bill that is consistent with the ongoing support for Alberta's heritage, which the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has shown for many years. This includes his leadership role in the development of the Etzikom Museum, which continues to celebrate the heritage of pioneers in southeast Alberta.

It is the responsibility of the Committee of the Whole to examine the legislation brought before it in order to produce laws that serve the best interests of Albertans. The bill before us today certainly upholds a huge element of the cultural heritage of this province.

Mr. Chairman, naturalist Henry David Thoreau is quoted as stating:

Every one finds by his own experience, as well as in history, that the era in which men cultivate the apple, and the amenities of the garden, is essentially different from that of the hunter and forest life, and neither can displace the other without loss.

I appreciate this sentiment as I feel it not only recognizes Alberta's agricultural legacy, but it also addresses the heart of what is stated in the preamble of Bill 201: "Whereas hunting, fishing and trapping have played important roles in shaping Alberta's social, cultural and economic heritage." These are activities that have an extremely long history which has been intertwined with the evolution of the human species.

If we look at the more modern perception of these activities, it's interesting to note that even though they are not being primarily conducted on the basis of survival requirements, we are witnessing the introduction of broader concepts relating to conservation biology. This is increasingly prominent in hunting, fishing, and trapping, with management seeking to integrate the needs of wildlife species and habitat conservation.

From a more historical context there were crucial components of hunter-gatherer societies that served to create a framework from which sprung the development of agriculture. On a global scale hunting, gathering, and fishing also contributed to the thematic mosaic found within stories and legends and as such have contributed to the enrichment of spoken and nonspoken language. On this continent these practices were at one point required skills necessary for the subsistence and survival of European colonists who emigrated from the Old World. My family immigrated to Alberta and have been part of this heritage for over 100 years, with many of them settling in the same area that this member that presented the bill is from.

If we restrict our analysis of these traditions to a more Albertan perspective, we can clearly see how they contributed to the uniqueness of our own provincial identity. Mr. Chairman, this identity began to be shaped approximately 11,000 years ago when the ancestors of today's native Americans first crossed the receding polar ice caps as they hunted animals that were migrating to North America. The people who ended up in what would become Alberta came from the south and, in much later waves, from the east. They

formed several broad groups within which many tribes established themselves, each with a distinct culture and language.

Alberta is blessed with many different First Nations groups and communities that have always relied on hunting and fishing. Mr. Chairman, many of Alberta's native tribes hunted bison, including the Blood and Piikani in my area, for almost all of their needs. They ate meat both fresh and dried and then pounded it into a powder form known as pemmican. They also made clothing, blankets, and teepee covers from the hides, fashioned bones into tools and ornaments, and used the dung as a source of fuel.

Much of the hunting done by Alberta's native Americans was accomplished through the practice of bowhunting. This was a unique experience which called for the hunter to be within a closer shooting range of approximately 45 yards of an animal. In order to be successful, the bowhunter had to pay particular attention to the prey's sense of smell, hearing, and sight. This would create an intimate hunter-prey dynamic and is one of the most compelling reasons why this activity is still popular in our province to this day and why the preamble to Bill 201 contains the wording: "Whereas hunting, fishing and trapping have played important roles in shaping Alberta's social, cultural and economic heritage."

Mr. Chairman, the Alberta Bowhunters Association and the Alberta Traditional Bowhunters Association are two groups that promote our provincial tradition of hunting, the specific qualifier being the use of archery equipment. The Alberta Traditional Bowhunters Association has indicated that the purpose of its society is to focus primarily on the promotion of hunting with traditional archery equipment, to promote and preserve the historic and cultural importance of the traditional bow and arrow and those individuals who have dedicated themselves to its purpose, that its members are committed to the support and fostering of ethical bowhunting across the globe in all places available to hunt, that its members have selected traditional bowhunting as a significant hunting activity of interest, that its members will act as ambassadors to all fellow hunters they meet in the field, that they will treat everyone in the field with respect, dignity, and fairness, that its members will respect the wildlife that they hunt in life and in death, and that the organization will create and promote opportunities for members to gather for the purpose of camaraderie, fellowship, and learning.

The Alberta Traditional Bowhunters Association is a recent organization, whereas its cousin the Alberta Bowhunters Association was initially formed in 1956. Its initial objective was the legalization of bowhunting in Alberta, and this was realized in 1957. This sport would evolve in lockstep with other hunting methodologies; however, because of the distinctive element of bowhunting, the government would establish slightly different parameters which would govern this activity.

4:00

I had the privilege recently of attending the Canadian bowhunting championships, which were held in Lethbridge a few weeks ago. Competitors from six years of age to seniors shared the joy and competition of this sport, which is seeing renewed interest and growth in southern Alberta. For example, hunting seasons would be lengthened to accommodate bowhunting. As well, specific stamps would be issued to bowhunters and special bows-only zones would be established in the province.

As stated in its constitution, the Alberta Bowhunters Association has the following aims:

1. To foster and expand the practice of archery, the sport of bowhunting and the spirit of good fellowship among archers.
2. To co-operate with the Provincial Government and all conservation organizations in the conservation of game; and to

encourage the use of the bow in the ethical hunting of all legal game; and to protect, improve and increase the privileges of bowhunters.

3. To provide programs of educational value, on bowhunting, archery and related subjects; and to establish and make available materials and information for interested persons.

Another group that shares these same goals and same values are the black powder clubs. In Lethbridge we have an extremely active black powder club. These are men and women that dress in historic garb and take great pleasure in using the armaments that were used for many, many years around the same time that bows and arrows were being used. The black powder clubs share all of the same values that the bow and arrow clubs do.

Mr. Chairman, I think it's important to recognize that the goals set out by these organizations I've spoken about signify the words "whereas hunting, fishing and trapping have played important roles in shaping Alberta's social, cultural and economic heritage" as laid out in the preamble to Bill 201. I stand to support this bill. I hope that my brief discussion about these organizations has cemented their relevance as an important component to Alberta's rich outdoor legacy of hunting, fishing, and trapping.

I know that in southern Alberta there are many organizations that feel that these are exactly the kinds of values that they hold to, groups such as Pheasants Forever and many of the other hunting groups that support both hunting and fishing and many great conservation efforts. In southern Alberta Trout Unlimited is another group that takes great pride and makes a great deal of effort in ensuring that fish stocks are available for the fishermen of Alberta.

So it is indeed a pleasure to stand on behalf of all of these organizations in southern Alberta and across our great province in support of Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the support and passage of this bill.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just to continue where I left off, the bill purports to expand, encourage, and promote the historical pursuits of hunting, fishing, and trapping, yet what the government has set up in terms of concepts like open spaces is hunting based on the size of your wallet – trophy hunting, American game hunters coming up, using Crown land that has been leased specifically for restricted, basically, hunting reserves for the privileged – and that is the opposite of what this bill is intending. As I say, if this government wants to promote hunting and first-day hunting of the season for youth and these kinds of promotional activities, you can't then restrict or use Crown land as a private, privileged circumstance where you deny access. Too often, I think, the proposal of this government is that instead of having oil and gas leases, which individuals can benefit from by leasing Crown land, now we're going to have restricted hunting leases, and that's a large concern for me.

Another concern I have is that part of Bill 201 purports to support the traditional values and the hunting rights of both First Nations and Métis. First Nations and Métis we know have the opportunity to hunt year-round on Crown land. However, what is happening to Crown land is that it's being tremendously reduced by industry. Almost a quarter of our northeast boreal forest, which has been the traditional hunting grounds of the Woodland Cree, has been so inundated with either mining or in situ operations, has been so crisscrossed with roads and grids that any type of traditional hunting or

trapping and traplines has been tremendously interrupted. So the traditional way of life has been very much compromised.

Also, we heard a member talking about the traditional nomadic pursuit of the buffalo and so on. Well, that ended in the mid-1800s, when trainloads of hunters who were simply after hides would go through on hunting trains and shoot from the train. Then they would have individuals do the skinning, and the whole carcass would be left. This is not anything to do with traditional aboriginal or Métis using the whole animal to the best bet, as was suggested with the pemmican and the various preparations of traditional meats, smoking fish, and so on. What is happening is that there has to be a balance.

Also, we've had difficulties and discussions with regard to what are First Nation and what are Métis hunting rights. The federal government put forward the Powley agreement, and it talked about hunting for subsistence and sustenance, but there seem to be crossovers as to which species are potentially open. For example, a well-curved sheep may not have a whole lot of meat on it but does have potential appeal if it's hunted as a trophy as opposed to for meat.

Likewise, the hunting of male and female animals. In a hunting season, for example, the number of females is limited by the abundance of that particular species in a particular area. With the hunting on the Crown lands there is not necessarily that kind of stewardship or maintenance of the number of animals that can be taken, and the idea that by having a particular right you can harvest as many animals as you believe are necessary and go through a self-regulating process isn't acceptable either.

We have to develop a balance. The traditional ways of hunting and the availability of land have been tremendously reduced, and further reducing it by leasing out Crown land for specific purposes, hunting out of season, et cetera, to me is a slippery slope we're heading for, which will not promote hunting to be enjoyed by the vast majority of Albertans who choose to take on that pursuit but will greatly restrict.

With all the various Crown land opportunities we also have to set aside land for natural game trails and migration routes like the Yellowstone to Yukon. We need to maintain these corridors to provide a degree of safety for the animals so that they can propagate and we can enjoy them into future generations, that we can enjoy their beauty as well as the opportunity to follow our traditional desires, if they so be there, to hunt.

4:10

It's a concern that wildlife corridors keep getting reduced. For example, some of the developments outside of Canmore have restricted the areas where animals can pass through the wildlife corridors. The desire to continue to build golf courses as opposed to protect wildlife habitats is very much a concern. The unsustainable practices of clear-cutting large areas of the forest also limit the opportunity for wildlife to have shelter as well as humans to have the secure watershed that these trees provide. We have to have a balance. We have to selectively log areas. We have to use one road for multipurposes rather than having separate roads for seismic, for resource extraction, whether it be timber or whether it be mineral.

We could do a whole lot better. We need to establish areas that are off-road areas. Some of these areas could potentially be used for hunting in traditional manners, where you don't have the advantage of having a snowmobile or a quad or the ability to drive up some forestry road right to the animal's habitat and drag it back. If we want to talk about traditional, let's talk about quartering the animal and carrying it back in a traditional fashion rather than coming in on a quad to access that particular area. Part of the hunting and fishing

that I experienced – and I hunted with a bow as well – was the challenge of getting close to the animal and following the traditional hunting methods instead of using a sight and spotting it from, you know, several hillsides over.

There has to be a balance, and I'm concerned that Bill 201, while claiming to uphold traditional hunting values and encourage young people to take up these pursuits, is actually part of a limitation and a restriction that is occurring in this province, following up on what industry has already taken away in terms of habitat. What little remains is being portioned off and partitioned in the name of game, rather than preserves, reserves, where a landowner would expect to be paid, and a significant amount of money, to hunt in those restricted areas. That's not traditional; that's turning basically game into game golf courses for the rich and privileged.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms DeLong: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, brought forward by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Bill 201 stands to provide Albertans with renewed pride in the acts of hunting, fishing, and trapping. Included in the preamble of Bill 201 is this statement: "Whereas the best traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping should be valued by future generations." I would like to speak to what that means for Albertans and future Albertans. I am in particular support of this portion of the act as I believe that passing these traditions in their truest form to our youth is the best method of securing these activities as a continued part of our society.

These beliefs are shared by many individuals, in particular the Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation. This foundation was established in April of 1999 when conservation organizations and federal and provincial government agencies formed a coalition to address the decline in Alberta's hunter population. Their goal is to promote hunting as a respected activity that has played a significant role in Alberta's heritage, culture, and environment. In the end they hope to increase all of public understanding, support, and involvement in hunting.

Hunting for Tomorrow first accomplishes their goal by promoting an increased sense of community amongst hunters. Mr. Chairman, in the past the foundation created a hunter participation and opportunities working group. The focus of this group was on maintaining or even enhancing hunting opportunities as well as increasing participation. To accomplish these goals, they investigated the reasons for the decline in the number of hunters that chose to hunt. They found that, by and large, there was an increasing difficulty in the accessibility to hunting areas. They therefore began working on a publication that would aid in identifying accessibility to hunting areas. Now, this endeavour is encouraging for hunters and, thus, helps to continue the tradition. Additionally, because hunting is often a family event, it promotes the transfer of the hunting tradition as well as the values to younger generations.

Now, the preamble mentioned earlier supports the transfer of knowledge regarding hunting, fishing, and trapping to Albertans now and into the future. This passage to youth is further embraced through the foundation's promotion of youth hunter education camps. These camps are hosted in the summer by the Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association and are designed for youth between the ages of 12 and 17. Here they receive instruction on the Alberta conservation and hunter education program and Canadian firearms safety, they're tested, and they do become certified. These certifications aid in the acquisition of a wildlife

identification number, which is required for hunting, and a minor's possession licence for firearms.

These camps encourage this honourable tradition, creating a community among young hunters as they exchange stories and learn new lessons. Youth continue to learn the importance of hunting and the role of conservationists with respect to both wildlife and nature. They learn of values and ethics which may primarily be about animal and nature welfare but extend into society and family life. Mr. Chairman, these are invaluable life lessons.

In addition, these kinds of experiences promote the continuance of this tradition. It is by these methods that we can see the knowledge and skills of this important sport passed on to future generations, as written in the preamble to Bill 201.

The Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation also extends these traditions by taking time to focus on women. They reported a 72 per cent increase in women hunters in 2006. By re-engaging detached hunters and by encouraging involvement from more women, we see the Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation carry on the best traditions of hunting to our future generations. These efforts, however, have a tendency to remain focused on individuals that are already aware of the value of hunting. As such, the Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation is making a parallel effort to foster and increase understanding and involvement in the traditions of hunting.

These goals have been addressed by publishing articles in papers, participating in radio and television interviews, and attending events such as trade shows and seminars. They promote the Alberta hunters who care wild game food bank program, which calls on hunters to share their harvest with Edmonton's Food Bank. What a good idea. Mr. Chairman, not enough meat is typically donated to the food bank, and this venture can certainly decrease, if not eliminate, its shortcomings. Their goal is to collect a total of 20,000 pounds of wild game every year. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture – I'm sorry that we couldn't get a statistic from Canada – the average person eats approximately half a pound of meat daily. A donation of this size is, therefore, approximately 40,000 daily servings of meat.

Also, in efforts to foster a more realistic and inherently positive view of hunting within our society, September 22 last year was the province's first Provincial Hunting Day. Hunting for Tomorrow was a major advocate of this day and hosted an event in Calgary in honour and recognition of hunting. This event was attended by the hon. Member for Foothills-Rockyview and his family. Individuals that learned about and became interested in hunting from these events were encouraged to contact the Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation and participate in a mentor program. A mentor could then assist them in learning the practice and theory of hunting.

4:20

Mr. Chairman, it is obvious that hunting as well as fishing and trapping are a part of our heritage. Is it not important that these traditions be not only understood but valued for our generations to come? Is it not obvious how in the absence of hunters, fishers, and trappers our ecosystems would suffer a great threat? Foundations like Hunting for Tomorrow hold similar values to this Assembly. They're working to expand the practice of these honourable traditions to other societies as well as into the next generations. It's foundations like Hunting for Tomorrow that will encourage the continuation of these traditions for generations to come.

Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, includes the promotion of good practices for future Albertans. Hunting for Tomorrow is a good example of what the preamble "whereas the best traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping should be valued by future generations" is all about.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's indeed a great pleasure to rise and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, brought forth by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Bill 201 embraces our province's history, and as such I stand before you giving my full support. Within the preamble of Bill 201 it is stated: "Whereas the best traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping should be valued by future generations." I firmly believe that we should pass on the knowledge and heritage of hunting, fishing, and trapping to future generations. It is one of the foundations of this great country.

Mr. Chairman, the preservation of these treasured activities is dependent on the preservation of our natural environment, and while hunters, fishermen, and trappers are major contributors to the surveillance and monitoring of nature and wildlife, there are many other organizations that are wholly committed to ensuring the preservation and prosperity of Alberta's balanced ecosystems. In light of this, I'd like to take this opportunity to speak of the phenomenal contribution of Ducks Unlimited Canada. Ducks Unlimited Canada, or DUC, is committed to the conservation of Canada's wetlands. Wetlands, very briefly, are the interface between aquatic life and terrestrial life, where the soil is saturated with moisture. Wetlands are nature's sieves. This boundary is a unique one in which an entirely novel ecosystem arises. It is here and only here that certain types of plants, insects, and wildlife can flourish.

Mr. Chairman, one such animal is waterfowl. Back in the 1930s, during the depression, drought and agricultural urban expansion contributed to a considerable decline in waterfowl population in Canada. At that time a group of sportsmen began to initiate habitat conservation projects in Canada to preserve both the habitat and, as an extension of that, their ability to hunt. They called themselves Ducks Unlimited. To this day DUC has positively influenced nearly 25 million acres of habitat in Canada. I think that begs repeating: 25 million acres of habitat. This is equivalent to about 15 per cent of Alberta's geographical span. DUC claim that in some areas of Canada up to 70 per cent of wetlands have been lost forever. I say that's a shame. If this trend continues, it may be difficult for hunters, fishermen, and trappers to practise their sport and for future generations to enjoy this experience.

DUC invests in conservation in many ways, and one method is direct habitat conservation. They concentrate on key threatened landscapes to ensure the greatest possible results. This includes, Mr. Chairman, but is not limited to wetland rehabilitation. This is where DUC works with landowners to rebuild and restore wetlands. It also includes wetlands securement, where significant wetlands are identified and secured, sometimes through donations or purchase. In both of these methods wildlife populations have the ability to prosper, and hunters, fishermen, and trappers can resume or continue their stewardship.

DUC also invests significantly in scientific research. DUC's research headquarters, the Institute for Wetland and Waterfowl Research, works to improve DUC's conservation programs. This research institute helps DUC in many ways. First is to research potential conservation sites to ensure that the site or area being considered is the most effective and efficient use of DUC resources. Second, Mr. Chairman, the institute finds specific solutions given the ecosystem of a particular wetland. The solution may vary if, for example, the pintail was the threatened species as opposed to, for example, the Canada goose. [interjection] I'm sure loons as well, hon. member.

In addition, the research branch is also responsible for establishing

the overall value in terms of goods and services of the wetlands to society. [interjections] I think the loons are moving in, Mr. Chairman.

DUC also has a hand in providing information to national and provincial governments that can be used in the development of policies and strategies that affect the wetlands. I think the waterfowl heard about this discussion, Mr. Chairman, and wanted to make sure that we appreciated their support.

All of these parameters ultimately contribute to the conservation of the wetlands, without which some of Alberta's hunting, fishing, and trapping would not be possible. In addition, Mr. Chairman, to ensuring the longevity of our wetlands and wildlife, DUC also invests significantly in passing along the knowledge and skills of our heritage to the next generation. Ducks Unlimited believes in the education of our youth as they are tomorrow's decision-makers and, of course, our future conservation leaders.

Amongst their 10 beliefs and values, Mr. Chairman, is the following: "The rich heritage of waterfowling and the contributions of sportsmen and women to conservation are recognized and treasured." This is one of the messages that they project through Project Webfoot, DUC's education mission. Although the focus is grades 4 through 6, classroom kits, which include engaging learning materials, can be provided to all elementary school grades. Also, wetland field trips are very popular for all grades. Beyond the elementary school setting Project Webfoot offers information and educational resources for students and teachers, including free lesson plans which are curriculum compatible across the entire nation.

Ducks Unlimited Canada also has five interpretive centres open to schools and the public, one of which is partnered by this government, Mr. Chairman, and it's located in the city of Calgary. All these resources encourage the message of the importance of wetlands and the role of sportsmen and women in conservation.

Bill 201 recognizes the importance of hunting, fishing, and trapping both within this province's heritage and currently as an important method of conservation. Organizations like Ducks Unlimited Canada significantly contribute to the preservation of wetlands. As such, it allows for the continuation of these traditional and treasured sports.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, Ducks Unlimited Canada is committed to educating our future generations about the wetlands, their value and importance in our society, and the history of their organization. Ducks Unlimited Canada is truly ensuring that the best traditions of hunting, fishing, and trapping continue to be valued by future generations. Mr. Chairman, I stand today in support of organizations like Ducks Unlimited Canada, and I want to thank them for the great environmental stewardship that they provide in our country.

I'm pleased to support Bill 201, and I would encourage all hon. members to support its passage. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4:30

The Chair: I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Griffiths: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act, brought forth by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin by mentioning the importance of section 1(1) of Bill 201. By incorporating section 1(1) into Bill 201, the rights of Alberta's hunters, fishers, and trappers will become further enshrined and acknowledged in law. Section 1(2) of Bill 201 is also very important in protecting the rights of Alberta's hunters, fishers, and trappers for many years into the future. It

mentions that "the reference to the law in subsection (1) includes the Wildlife Act, the Fisheries Act (Canada), the Migratory Birds Convention Act, 1994 (Canada) and the regulations made under those Acts." Referring to these pieces of legislation is a way for our government to clarify the rights these groups of individuals have, removing the stigma attached to their hobbies, pastimes, and businesses.

Mr. Chairman, hunting, fishing, and trapping are all equally important activities of Alberta's past. I'd like to focus, however, primarily on the rights Bill 201 further acknowledges for fishermen in the province of Alberta. It does this by referencing the federal Fisheries Act. In section 1(2) of the Fisheries Act both Alberta fishermen and the Alberta public in general will be able to further their understanding of the rights of fishermen as well as the fishing methods which are prohibited by law.

The Fisheries Act, Mr. Chairman, establishes a regime for the proper management and control of fisheries. It allows the federal minister to stabilize access and allocation in fisheries, issue fishing licences, conclude agreements with groups that participate in fishery, and to issue fishing licences. Referencing the Fisheries Act is also important not only because it explains the rights of fishermen, but the act provides for the conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat, for the control and management of invasive species, and for the management and regulation of Canada's fisheries in general. For example, section 25(1) states that "subject to the regulations, no person shall place or set any fishing gear or apparatus in any water, along any beach or within any fishery during a close time." The close time is a specified period in which fishing is closed season or closed to protect a particular species. Section 25(1) is a perfect example of how the Fisheries Act recognizes the fundamental right Canadians have to fish so long as it is done responsibly and within season, protecting our fish fauna for our future generations.

Reference to the Fisheries Act is also important because it clarifies basic rules pertaining to fishing. For example, section 25(2) mentions that "any person who places or sets any fishing gear or apparatus in any water, along any beach or within any fishery shall remove it when the gear or apparatus is not being tended and prior to the commencement of a close time." This prohibition may seem quite obvious for many members of this Assembly, Mr. Chairman, but the reality is that without reference to such a simple rule irresponsible fishermen could leave their rods and equipment around the water unattended for hours, cooking their burgers and consuming refreshing beverages, carefree of the environment around them.

The Fisheries Act, Mr. Chairman, also protects the environment. Section 35(1) of the act mentions that "no person shall carry on any work or undertaking that results in the harmful alteration, disruption or destruction of fish habitat." This, once again, may seem quite obvious to many Albertans, but it is important to recognize that Alberta's fishermen have no right to disrupt fish habitats in pursuing prized trophies.

The placement of unauthorized dams to direct fish traffic, Mr. Chairman, is an example of prohibited behaviour under the Fisheries Act. In fact, it even prohibits certain unconventional methods of fishing in order to sustain our environment and fish numbers. For example, in section 28 the Fisheries Act mentions that "no one shall hunt or kill fish or marine animals of any kind, other than porpoises, whales, walruses, sea-lions and hair seals, by means of rockets, explosive materials, explosive projectiles or shells." [interjection] It's true.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I know it's not likely that yourself or any other member of this Assembly has considered using rockets to go fishing for lake trout, but with the Fisheries Act we would not be able to do so even if we desired to. Simply put, Bill 201 further

clarifies the rights of Alberta's hunters, fishers, and trappers. It references various other pieces of legislation to this, and in my opinion it very successfully highlights in those pieces of legislation the rights which are already granted to Alberta's hunters, fishers, and trappers. With the addition of Bill 201 the rights of Alberta fishermen, fishermen who have used the abundant fishing resources of Alberta's waterways since our province's inception, will be further recognized.

Alberta fishermen are great contributors to our province, Mr. Chairman. They contribute economically, and they exhibit an inclined sense of environmentalism, knowing that a healthy environment is one in which they will be able to fish for many more years to come. Therefore, any further clarification of their rights should be welcomed with open arms and be accepted by all members of this Assembly, and I encourage all members to support this.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Jacobs: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's certainly a pleasure for me to rise today and join the debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. I have to certainly, again, thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for bringing forth this legislation. I certainly agree with the Minister of Energy that the calls I've had on this bill from constituents and others have been very positive. It would appear that many Albertans feel there was a need for this legislation and are grateful it has been brought forth.

Mr. Chairman, Bill 201 recognizes the role that hunting, fishing, and trapping have played on Alberta's heritage. Section 1(1) of this bill says that "a person has a right to hunt, fish and trap in accordance with the law." This statement is profound in that it justifies that hunting, fishing, and trapping are activities that are not to be interfered with when they are being performed within the scope of the law. The rights of hunters, fishermen, and trappers are protected, thus protecting the role these activities played in our heritage and protecting the continuance of them into the future.

There are many organizations that support the role of outdoorsmen and work hard at educating others on the benefits of hunting, fishing, and trapping. There are also many organizations that work at protecting the rights of individuals who partake in conservation activities such as hunting, fishing, and trapping. Mr. Chairman, one such organization, also the largest organization, is the Safari Club International. Safari Club International, or SCI, is a leader in protecting the freedom to hunt and in promoting wildlife conservation worldwide. SCI has members in more than one hundred countries. They fight tirelessly to protect the hunting heritage enjoyed by 45 million families around the globe.

The northern Alberta chapter is an organization of avid hunters and outdoor people who dedicate themselves to promoting the responsible use of Alberta's natural resources. Mr. Chairman, these are individuals who care about wildlife and the environment. The Alberta chapter requires members to make a pledge that includes making a positive contribution to wildlife and ecosystems and to improve upon their skills as woodsmen and marksmen to ensure humane harvesting of wildlife. Section 1(1) of the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act protects the rights of these outdoor enthusiasts so that the promises or pledges made by the members of this foundation and others can be carried out, benefiting our environment.

4:40

Another part of the pledge of the Alberta chapter of SCI is to

comply with all game laws in the spirit of fair chase and to influence companions accordingly. SCI understands the value of working within the parameters of the law, and that's why its members must agree to this term and are required to encourage fellow enthusiasts to do the same. This comes also with a requirement to provide all possible assistance to game law enforcement officers.

Membership with this foundation requires that members waste no opportunity to teach young people the full meaning of the code of ethics, to reflect in word and behaviour only credit upon the fraternity of sportsmen, and to demonstrate abiding respect for game, habitat, and property wherever they may be privileged to hunt. Mr. Chairman, this 100 per cent volunteer organization has created an oath that truly exemplifies the role that is expected of all Albertans who partake in hunting, fishing, and trapping.

In 2007 SCI funded many conservation and humanitarian projects. One of the projects I would like to highlight is the Sensory Safari. The Sensory Safari has been put on every year since 2002, when SCI, the northern Alberta chapter, hosted the first Canadian Sensory Safari. Every year since then the northern Alberta chapter has provided at least one Sensory Safari in different venues. This flagship event for the northern chapter of SCI is a touch and feel experience for the visually impaired. Children and adults who are visually impaired are provided an opportunity to see wildlife by touching and feeling. The Sensory Safari utilizes donated and borrowed animal mounts, skins, skulls, and horns to help visually impaired and disabled people come to better know wildlife.

The sixth annual Sensory Safari was held on June 16, 2007, at the Royal Alberta Museum with help from the Canadian National Institute for the Blind. Mr. Chairman, the CNIB created Braille cards for each animal as well as contacted many participants and media about the event. The 2007 summer newsletter of the Alberta chapter of SCI reported that the event was especially rewarding as the faces of the participants, especially the kids, lit up when they touched the whiskers of a tiger or touched a live snake.

This foundation values education, finding innovative ways to include those who may otherwise never have the opportunity to experience wildlife in this manner or to this extent. Being a responsible outdoorsman means acquiring knowledge and becoming the best at what you can do. It also means passing that knowledge on to others and, in this case, to others who cannot participate in hunting, fishing, and trapping in the same capacity afforded to other Albertans. Bill 201 encourages hunters, fishers, and trappers to engage in these sports responsibly, and becoming educated is part of being responsible.

Mr. Chairman, the northern Alberta chapter of SCI also sponsors one teacher from Alberta to attend the American Wilderness Leadership School. It is a one-week course in Jackson, Wyoming, that consists of academic lectures, discussions, and field trips covering Rocky Mountain wildlife, wildlife ecology, environmental ethics, natural resource management, and conservation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to highlight some of the important programs that the Alberta chapter provides. It is important to acknowledge those who benefit from the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act and to understand the good work these foundations do for our province.

Bill 201 is especially aimed through section 1(1) at protecting the rights of those who abide by the existing laws and benefit our environment, economy, and those who take part. I believe Bill 201 will encourage many Alberta foundations, outdoor enthusiasts, and individual Albertans to enjoy hunting, fishing, and trapping now and into the future. I therefore encourage the support of this bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Now I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 201, the Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has brought recognition to a tradition that's played such an integral role in Alberta's history. Hunting, fishing, and trapping have been an important part of our communities since before Alberta became a province, and this tradition continues today. Under the preamble, "Whereas the best traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping should be valued by future generations," Bill 201 affirms the Alberta government's commitment to the continuation of these outdoor activities. This allows for groups to participate in the educating and promoting of safety and of the conservation of our right to hunt, fish, and trap.

Mr. Chairman, there are numerous organizations who exemplify proper management of our wildlife. They play a vital role in showing future generations the value of stewardship. One such organization is Trout Unlimited Canada. They provide Albertans with numerous ways to protect, conserve, and restore Canada's freshwater ecosystems. With chapters across Canada the group has maintained much of our freshwater ecosystems for future generations. This allows for our fishing community to be able to fish in some of the finest lakes, rivers, and streams in the world. The association also develops solutions to many of the concerns that challenge our freshwater resources. By using scientific methods and experiments, they are able to effectively study and employ these solutions.

One program that applies this method to conservation is the coldwater conservation fund. Launched in 2004, Trout Unlimited Canada established the fund to support science-based rehabilitation programs. Through the national conservation agenda the group can conduct activities such as watershed demonstration and rehabilitation projects, research on biological and economic issues that can affect the long-term health of watershed systems, and research and support of management and recovery for fish stocks. This can ensure long-term sustainability for Albertans to continue fishing our freshwater resources.

The progress taken towards conservation requires that what we do now is for the future. Mr. Chairman, educating our youth about proper wildlife conservation is necessary for the stewardship of our province. Trout Unlimited Canada promotes this agenda through their Yellow Fish Road program. This program is a huge success for education. These young volunteers are very active in their pursuit of healthy fish populations. They paint yellow fish symbols with the words "rainwater only" near open storm drains to warn people not to dump anything into them. They also distribute fish-shaped brochures to households in an effort to remind people that everything they dump down the drain can affect the nearby water body and the creatures that live in it. With almost 9,000 children painting over 7,000 storm drains in 2006, it looks as if they are the ones educating us. This is an important contribution to inform and educate our communities on the impact everyone can have on the surrounding wildlife. Moreover, it will benefit the future generations of anglers who can continue to enjoy our fresh water and healthy fish populations just as it is laid out in the preamble of Bill 201.

Another organization that is dedicated to contributing to the protection of Alberta's wildlife is Pheasants Forever. Mr. Chairman, through their dedication to conserving pheasants, quail, and other wildlife, Pheasants Forever ensures that future generations will be able to enjoy everything we have today. With this diverse group of

over 115,000 members in the United States and Canada this organization has a multitude of stakeholders coming from various backgrounds. Farmers, hunters, conservation enthusiasts, and wildlife officials each bring to the table their experience and expertise. This enables Pheasants Forever to assist with a number of different challenges our wildlife may face. Since 1982 this group has benefited over 4 million acres across the continent through their various projects. Their habitat projects empower local chapters and volunteers who administer the proper course of action to their local projects at a rate of over 27,000 projects per year.

Mr. Chairman, the impact these conservation efforts have made cannot be understated. Each project takes time, effort, and dedication to see it to completion. If you calculate the amount of hours put into these projects every year, the number would be astronomical.

4:50

They have also worked alongside federal, provincial, and local natural resource authorities in order to develop and maintain land acquisitions. Well over 100,000 acres of land is open to public hunting. This will allow future generations of hunters to appreciate the value of their activity and all of the hard work it has taken to continue that tradition. In order to properly enjoy it, they must first be educated in how they can become proper stewards for this land. Pheasants Forever advocates and administers educational programs for public awareness through a partnership with Quail Forever. They develop programs and materials that promote education and public awareness. This co-operation has produced the Leopold education project, which is an award-winning conservation education program, as well as youth programs called Ringnecks and Whistlers that introduce thousands of young people to the outdoors each year.

Mr. Chairman, every one of these groups should be very proud of their accomplishments. They contribute to the conservation of our natural resources, the wildlife, and the environment in which they live. Bill 201 relates this message in its preamble: "the best traditions of hunting, fishing and trapping should be valued by future generations." The Alberta government along with other organizations is working hard at educating Albertans on the value of these traditions. As long as we continue to promote responsible hunting, fishing, and trapping, these activities will continue into the future.

I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for bringing this bill to this Assembly, and I believe that it promotes the right to practise the tradition of hunting and fishing and trapping. I support this bill. Thank you very much for the time, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Dr. Morton: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to begin by thanking the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for his foresight and industriousness in bringing forward Bill 201, a much-needed addition to our hunting and fishing heritage and legislative support for that heritage. I'd also like to thank the hundreds of Albertans who have telephoned, e-mailed, and written the members of this Assembly over the last two or three weeks urging us to support Bill 201, and I want to send the message back to them that obviously the members have heard them speak, and we intend to support this.

On a less pleasant note I have to digress and correct a few misstatements by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, and I would suggest to him that if he wants his comments to be taken seriously, they must be accurate. Not once but twice today the hon. member has mistakenly stated that the open spaces initiative would apply to Crown lease lands. This is not true. It's been pointed out on

numerous occasions on websites and printed materials that it would apply only to deeded land. So let the record show the truth and not misstatements. The Member for Calgary-Varsity should get his facts straight if he wants to shoot straight.

Now, on the subject of liberals I would like to point out that on April 21 I noted that a well-known liberal, Senator Clinton from New York, a candidate for the Democratic nomination for President in the United States, in a very highly contested presidential primary in the state of Pennsylvania had spoken out in support of hunting. Given her reputation as a great liberal, I think the people of Alberta should know what Senator Clinton said back on April 15. She 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." It may have just been a coincidence, but a few days later Senator Clinton won the Pennsylvania presidential primary for the Democrats, and I'm sure her support for Bill 201 played a role in that.

Now, moving away from liberals and coming closer to home, I want to pick up where I left off last time, with the *Calgary Herald* article of April 19, the going green section and recommendation 4, "Eat local." That article points out that the average meal on a Canadian's plate travels thousands of kilometres to get from wherever it starts to your plate. This sounds shocking, but just think for a moment. Fruit and vegetables from Mexico and South America, lamb from Australia, wines and fizzy water from France, olives from North Africa, rice from Asia: for each of those items it's burning up thousands of litres of gas and diesel to bring that food to our plates. So heed what the *Calgary Herald* says: eat local. Compare what the alternative is, particularly what the hunting and fishing heritage act provides opportunity for: a tasty mule deer from Milk River Ridge, a delectable pheasant from Brooks, an elk from Ya Ha Tinda, a tasty roast mallard from Stettler, or perhaps a juicy moose roast from McLennan or the Peace River area. Eat local. Nothing is more local than our local fish and game.

Now, I want to close by pointing out some other environmental benefits of eating our local fish and game. I'm borrowing this from Dr. Lee Foote, one of the outstanding wildlife biologists at the University of Alberta. Dr. Foote has pointed out the following merits of wild game and wild fish from Alberta: it's locally produced without artificial insemination; there are no antibiotics, no steroids, no artificial growth hormones; its production required no land clearing, no fencing, no fertilizer or feedlots; the animal was never confined, transported, or kept in crowded conditions; the lean meat, before it goes into the oven, was never wrapped in plastic or Styrofoam packaging, and no nitrates or sulphides were applied to prevent discolouration. Once again, eat local.

Once a month or once every few months when we have friends over at our house for a wild game dinner, I begin the meal by asking our guests to bow their heads and give thanks for our meal, and I end by saying: let us prey, p-r-e-y.

Please support Bill 201. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Mitzel: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We've heard from many in the House this afternoon. I'm encouraged by everyone who spoke today in Committee of the Whole. Many spoke of various organizations who have memberships of people from many different age groups, many different walks of life, and certainly both genders. These people are drawn together by common interests, be it hunting, fishing, trapping, camping, photography. The list goes on and on. These organizations have mandates to protect their respective

interests, species, and through their individual fundraising efforts ensure that species and habitat are enhanced throughout Alberta.

I heard a comment from the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, who mentioned that there already is legislation which gives everyone the right to hunt. To be clear, the Wildlife Act does not say that any Albertan has the right to hunt, fish, or trap. In an oblique way it may imply that the right is there, but it only states that if they wish to pursue any of these activities, regulations and laws are in place which outline how they may do this activity. Bill 201 does say that Albertans have the right, legislates the right of anyone who wishes to hunt, fish, or trap according to the laws and regulations as prescribed by the Wildlife Act, the Fisheries Act, and the Public Lands Act, to name three. That's why this bill is here before us today in Committee of the Whole. I know that hunting, fishing, and trapping is not for everyone, but neither are many other things that many Albertans do. Hunting, fishing, and trapping is for those who wish to do so for recreation, for enjoyment, for sport, or for sustenance.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5:00

The Chair: Does any other member want to speak? We have two minutes.

Mr. Chase: Do we have an opportunity to use those last two minutes to discuss the bill further?

The Chair: Yes, as part of the discussion.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. I just want to respond to the member for Rocky View, is it?

Dr. Morton: Foothills-Rocky View.

Mr. Chase: Yes. Okay. Thank you.

I do appreciate his clarification that it's only deeded land that the open spaces refers to and, as such, Crown land; therefore, it cannot be turned into a game reserve circumstance. That's important to know. I still have concerns about the leasing of Crown land and the potential for hunting to occur within those leases within or without a seasoned experience.

When I've hunted in Saskatchewan and Ontario and Alberta, there were certain times when there was an overabundance, for example, of ducks going into farmers' fields and creating havoc, so special considerations were given and seasons were extended, or the number of animals or birds that you could take was extended as well.

I am concerned about the idea of promoting hunting, which I support, and the reduced amount of land available to the general public to pursue that hunt. I'm not convinced that Bill 201 is increasing that ability. I am concerned about restrictions.

I'll sit down so that the hon. member can respond in the 30 seconds available, if I'm incorrect.

The Chair: Any other hon. member?

It's finished. The time of 120 minutes is finished. The debate is finished. All questions must be decided to conclude the debate on a private member's public bill which has received 120 minutes of debate in Committee of the Whole. I now must put the following questions to conclude debate.

[The clauses of Bill 201 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

I'd like to now recognize our Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee now rise and report Bill 201.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 201.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

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

**Bill 203
Election Statutes (Fixed Election Dates)
Amendment Act, 2008**

[Adjourned debate April 28: Mr. Oberle]

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to recognize the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Marz: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise and offer my thoughts on Bill 203, the Election Statutes (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2008. This bill calls for the establishment of fixed election dates and adds the interesting supplement of synchronizing the municipal and provincial terms into alternating two-year intervals.

As many of my fellow colleagues have indicated, the intent of this bill seems to be grounded on the bedrock of democratic reform. We've heard that this is an issue that transcends politics. Well, yes and no. Quite simply, there are a number of members in this Legislature that have championed the virtues of fixed election dates within a number of different forms, be it through writings, elections or, most importantly, in ongoing dialogue with their constituents.

I truly believe that all members of this Assembly are people of good character and that each individually seeks in their own way to act in the best interests of the people of this province. I'm proud to be counted in the company of this House for that very reason. Within this context the dialogue we are having here is a reflection on how this concept of democratic reform is beyond political claim. It's an issue that affects all Albertans and, therefore, is of much importance. Fixed election dates are a feature of this concept.

As I've listened to our discussion thus far, I have found myself wondering why democratic reform has become so popular in the first place. When did some people begin to decide that there were

symptoms that the state of democracy in our nation and our province was ailing? There are those present in this Assembly today who have spoken towards a prevailing trend of civic apathy in Canada. We can see this in the postelection commentaries of analysts and statisticians in newspapers indicating that more and more people seem to be ignoring the ballot box. As elected representatives this gives us all reason for concern.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that every single member of this Assembly is steadfast in the ultimate conviction that freedom is not a prerogative but a fundamental and universal right inherent in every human being. This belief is entrenched within the spoken and written constitutions of democratic countries penned by our historical predecessors who sought to give this belief a voice. Civic indifference becomes especially hard to bear when we consider that there are forces in this world that would use terror and subversion to restrain the human spirit and yoke it for its purposes of tyranny and destruction.

History, both ancient and modern, is replete with examples of such repression. These periods have become crucibles from which great moments of global significance have occurred: for example, the affixing of King John's Great Seal to the document of Magna Carta in 1215, transferring the power of the monarchy from one person to many in an event many historians consider to be the birth of parliamentary governance; or the drafting of the declaration in America, 13 colonies that saw the world's first large-scale experimentation with a republic, an experiment begun with a unified voice, stating that all people are created equal, endowed with absolute rights safeguarded by governments deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

This is the legacy of all democracies. This is our inheritance. This is why we become so passionate when we talk about this notion of democratic reform. It's why we have had such a lively debate in this Assembly so far today.

5:10

We who stand in these places of good government cannot comprehend how an individual person can easily disregard their freedom simply because casting a ballot becomes inconvenient. Why? Because a politician wears the wrong suit or cannot use popular mannerisms? Mr. Speaker, an abstinence from public matters leaves us baffled, and when we hear that more and more people choose to disengage, then all elected representatives wonder what they're doing wrong. How do we counter a prevailing attitude that speaks about droves of people turning towards an attitude of cynicism which has discarded the time-tested values upon which our democratic legacy is based?

Some would respond that we need democratic renewal. They speak about the need for set-term elections because they feel that this will bring our voters back into the fold, that this could result in better efficiency, organization, preparedness, and cost. Perhaps. It certainly hasn't resulted in higher participation rates in civic elections. Some in this Assembly believe that implementing fixed election dates will illustrate our responsiveness as elected officials and as government. If people refuse to vote, then we can react by fixing a system perceived to be flawed by contrived political manoeuvring. Again, perhaps this will re-energize the seemingly weary elector. Herein lies the danger that this idea represents, Mr. Speaker: it's a cosmetic repair, a mechanism that creates serious changes to our electoral system. This is something we cannot do simply for the sake of doing something.

The Member for St. Albert has brought forth an idea that has impassioned many members of this Assembly, and I believe this has occurred because we all believe in the principles of good governance, self-determination, and diverse representation. The American

President Ronald Reagan once said, "One's country is worth dying for, and democracy is worth dying for, because it's the most deeply honourable form of government ever devised by man." In Alberta we all relate to this, but we must also recognize that our participation in this process is a matter for every single Albertan to consider and take responsibility for. It cannot be remedied by quick fixes, nor can it be resolved within the structure and the breadth of Bill 203.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 203 be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 203, the Election Statutes (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2008, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I will provide some time for the pages to distribute the notice of amendment to all the members.

I recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, to speak on the amendment.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I don't think this amendment is necessary. Some would call this a hoist amendment, but in this situation it's a punt amendment. Punt this bill out of the Assembly and hope that it never will be seen again.

I think that when we look at the initial bill, now is certainly the time for this Assembly to deal with the matter of fixed election dates. The hon. Member for St. Albert should be commended and recognized for his commitment to fixed election dates. It is astonishing to me why with this amendment we would not want to deal with this matter at this time. Certainly, I recognize, like all other individuals and many groups in this province, that there has to be significant electoral reform in this province. We talked about this before, about what happened in British Columbia. There was a commitment there by Premier Campbell to change how B.C. elects their government. It worked there.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, it's 5:15. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, but under Standing Order 19(1)(c) I must now put the question on the following motion for consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's speech.

Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Leskiw moved that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To His Honour the Honourable Norman L. Kwong, CM, AOE, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate April 29: Mr. Chase]

[The voice vote indicated that the motion carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:16 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Allred	Griffiths	Oberle
Amery	Hayden	Ouellette
Berger	Horner	Prins
Bhullar	Jacobs	Quest
Campbell	Johnson	Renner
Cao	Knight	Rogers
Dallas	Leskiw	Snelgrove
DeLong	Lund	Stevens
Doerksen	Marz	VanderBurg
Drysdale	McQueen	Weadick
Elniski	Mitzel	Webber
Evans	Morton	Xiao
Goudreau		

Against the motion:

Chase	Notley	Pastoor
MacDonald		

Totals: For – 37 Against – 4

[Motion carried]

Government Motions

Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

11. Mr. Renner moved on behalf of Mr. Stelmach:
Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

The Speaker: It's a debatable motion.
Should I call the question?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Government Motion 11 carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Renner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move now that the Assembly adjourn until 7:30 this evening, at which time we will still be in Assembly with private members' business.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Monday, May 5, 2008

Introduction of Visitors	417
Introduction of Guests	417, 427
Members' Statements	
Guru Nanak Dev Healing Garden	418
Commemoration of Holodomor	418
International Day of the Midwife	419
Human Rights	427
Dutch Liberation Day	427
Occupational Health and Safety	427
Oral Question Period	
Environmentally Sustainable Oil Sands Development	419
Monitoring of Oil Sands Tailings Ponds	420, 422
Midwifery Services	420, 423, 424
Sustainable Resource Development Inspectors	420
Mazankowski Alberta Heart Institute	421
Corrections Officers	421
Seniors' Lodge Assistance Program	422
Emergency Public Warning System	422
Kindergarten Programs	423
Charitable Tax Credit	424
Land-use Framework	424
Provincial Nominee Program	425
Calgary Urban Campus Partnership	425
Highway 727	426
Random Dog Searches	426
Crime Reduction and Safe Communities	426
Presenting Petitions	428
Tabling Returns and Reports	428
Tablings to the Clerk	428
Calendar of Special Events	429
Written Questions	429
Motions for Returns	429
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 201, Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Heritage Act	430
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 203, Election Statutes (Fixed Election Dates) Amendment Act, 2008	443
Consideration of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech	444
Government Motions	
Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne	444

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