



Province of Alberta

The 27th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

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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, November 3, 2008

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

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

Let us pray. From our forests and parkland to our prairies and mountains comes the call of our land. From our farmsteads, towns, and cities comes the call of our people that as legislators of this province we act with responsibility and sensitivity. Grant us the wisdom to meet such challenges. Amen.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we'll now participate in the singing of our national anthem. I will call on Mr. Paul Lorieau to lead us. Please participate in the language of one's choice.

### Hon. Members:

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

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Visitors

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a great honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you a beautiful couple from my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie, Harry and Stella Metrunec, seated in the Speaker's gallery. Harry was born in Myrnam, Alberta, and Stella was born in Musidora, Alberta. On Saturday, November 1, Mr. and Mrs. Metrunec celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary, which I had the privilege of attending with their family and friends. At their party the Metrunecs shared their marriage licence with me, which was issued in 1938 from vital stats, and their certificate of marriage in Vegreville. It was a moment of historical significance for me to be able to see these documents first-hand. In their 70 wonderful years of marriage they have been blessed with two sons, two grandchildren, four stepgrandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Today Mr. and Mrs. Metrunec are joined by their son Cliff and their daughter-in-law Janet. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mr. Bhardwaj:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you a group of students from Meyonohk elementary school from my constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. These students are participating in the School at the Legislature program this week. I had the privilege of meeting them during the Read In Week in September as well as in the rotunda just moments ago, and I wish them a very informative week. I would ask

the students and their teacher, Mrs. Sylvester, and a student teacher, Mrs. Stahl, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You all know that I represent the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre, but I also get to have the amazing Victoria school in that fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Centre. I am just delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two classes of students from Victoria school that are with us today in the public gallery. They are accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Carla Nahirney and Mrs. Stacey Taylor, and with them as well are parent helpers Ms Jane Richards and Mrs. Suzanne Dias. If I could ask them all to please rise and accept the very warm and fantastic welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and introduce to you and through you to all hon. members of this Assembly a visiting group from Fulton Place elementary school, another fine public school in Edmonton. This group is 15 individuals in total, I believe. They are led by Mr. Michael Lam, one of the excellent teachers in our public system. He is accompanied today by parent and grandparent volunteers. The grandparents are Mrs. Marge Van Horne and Mr. George Van Horne, and the parent volunteers are Mr. Allan Pon and Miss Debbie Rohatynski. I had the pleasure of visiting this classroom during Read In Week. It's an excellent class, and Mr. Lam should be congratulated. They're in the public gallery, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly a group from the legislative services area of Employment and Immigration. Earlier I had the privilege of meeting with them, and it allowed me to find out how fortunate we are to have great staff such as they. They are touring the Legislature today. I would ask them to stand as I introduce them: our administrative co-ordinator, Cecilia Fernandes; legislative co-ordinator, Shawna Brilliant; and our managers, Danielle Hoffman, Cathy Jo Kickham, and Jill Willis. I would ask all the members of the Assembly to give these guests a very warm welcome to our Legislature.

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

**Ms Woo-Paw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly someone from an incredible organization that I had the opportunity to be associated with for almost 20 years. With us today in the members' gallery is Ms Trish Bond, the director of strategic initiatives, community investments, and collaborations from the United Way of Calgary. This United Way has focused on providing greater opportunities to children, assisting families to get out of poverty, and establishing strong and supportive communities. I would ask that she stand and receive the traditional warm welcome from this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Others? The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Legislature three individuals who have been active members of their communities and very important people in my life. The first two people I'd like to introduce are my aunt and uncle Bill and Shirley Vanrobaeys from Lethbridge, Alberta. My uncle Bill has been a long-time volunteer in the community, coaching and volunteering with many soccer and swimming organizations. Further, he is one of Alberta's many proud small-business owners. Under his leadership and with the assistance of my cousins Dave, Wade, and Cheri and, of course, my aunt Shirley, they have made the Gentle Giant Delivery company one of Alberta's many successful family-run businesses. Further, although now retired, my aunt Shirley was a long-time schoolteacher in Lethbridge. Apparently, for close to 40 years nobody ran a grade 2 classroom like my aunt. I believe that the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West can attest to this as both of his children, Josh and Lauren, were taught by my Aunt Shirley. Further to being an excellent schoolteacher, my aunt did a wonderful job in raising her three children and is the proud grandmother of three.

**1:40**

The third individual I'd like to introduce is my mother, Judy Hehr. As well as raising her two children, yours truly and my sister, Christy, a lawyer with TransCanada Pipelines, Judy was and is a great mother and is a phenomenal grandparent to my nephews, Marshall and Jackson. Further, my mother is a recently retired schoolteacher. When I was eight and my sister was six, my mother went back to school and completed an education degree. For the next 30 years she would teach kindergarten, become a team leader, complete both her master's and doctorate degrees in education, and finish her career as a principal in the Calgary public system. Mr. Speaker, she is also a great political organizer and the one volunteer who never says no to the sometimes recalcitrant and lackadaisical MLA for Calgary-Buffalo. Clearly, and in no uncertain terms, I would be nothing without her undying love and continual support.

I would invite these people to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you our latest recruit, Jennifer Runke, who I would ask to stand up. Jennifer adds a third doctorate to our team, and therefore the Liberal caucus will be well advised and prepared to deal with all that ails us.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

### Members' Statements

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

#### Writings on the Wall Conference

**Mr. Elniski:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, November 1, I had the pleasure of being the keynote speaker at the Writings on the Wall conference at Queen Elizabeth high school. This conference is put on each year by the McArthur school council to encourage the development of student writing and literacy skills, supporting parents and strengthening ties between home, school, and community. It seeks to encourage the development of literacy skills and emphasizes the importance of education, learning, reading, and writing. This conference helps children to take an active role in their education and flourish into whole, healthy individuals who can positively contribute to the community.

I spoke about the importance of all these things to the audience. I spoke about the importance of participation, interaction, engagement, advocacy, and, most of all, creativity. Mr. Speaker, I spoke about opportunity and how we must continue to ensure that children have the necessary support systems in place to seize the opportunities that they are privileged to. This conference was an incredible forum to connect, share ideas, thoughts, and concerns with parents, students, and teachers. I hope to take part in this conference next year to see all of the progress that has been made regarding the initiatives that were discussed.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

#### Bentley Malt Barley

**Mr. Prins:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an exciting time for the Alberta barley industry. After 10 years of hard work another new barley variety, called Bentley, has been developed and is creating a lot of enthusiasm in the barley feeding and malting industries. Bentley is a new high-yielding grain and forage barley that was developed at the Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's Field Crop Development Centre in Lacombe. A great deal of the credit for the development of this new cultivar must go to Dr. Patricia Juskiw and Dr. Jim Helm. This two-row barley variety was named to honour world-renowned soil scientist the late Dr. Fred Bentley.

Bentley barley yields approximately 10 per cent higher than other leading barleys and has an earlier maturation date. Its kernels are plump, and its low protein make it perfect for brewing good-quality beer. Bentley is an excellent multipurpose variety in areas throughout the province because of its high forage yields and disease-resistant properties. Currently malting barley varieties account for about 80 per cent of the total barley grown in the province. Only about 20 per cent of the malting barley is accepted for malting. It is hoped that the introduction of Bentley will improve the quality and quantity of barley available to the malting industry both in Alberta and around the world, which is good news for all people who enjoy a good glass of beer.

Rahr Malting, located in my constituency in the town of Alix, has the largest single-cell malt plant in the world, capable of malting 30,000 bushels of barley per day, or enough to make about 3 million bottles of beer per day and a lot of other malt products.

I congratulate the Alberta Field Crop Development Centre in Lacombe for its many discoveries and accomplishments. I would encourage all members to raise a glass of beer to celebrate their achievements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

#### Innovations Project

**Mr. Doerksen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to celebrate a project that is doing some very good work in my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. The innovations project is a school-based program that meets the needs of kids and families in the three elementary schools in the community of Brooks. The innovations project enables students to access a mental health therapist, family resource worker, public health nurse, and family-school liaison counsellors. This talented and dedicated staff actively works with students, school staff, and families to meet their needs and conducts many health and mental health promotion and preventive activities. The innovations project is one of 32 projects being conducted around Alberta to develop new ways of offering

broad-based supports and early intervention initiatives, wraparound services to help students in their schools.

At the end of August 100 people from the education, mental health, and health fields gathered for a conference called Collaborate for Kids' Sake. This entire conference is recorded on video and can be accessed on the Alberta Education website. I highly recommend that all members check out the projects in their constituencies that are doing great work like the innovations project. These programs are an ideal way to offer a full spectrum of supports for students and families facing stresses as a result of mental health, addictions, and family instability issues. They also promote good nutrition, self-esteem, and active living.

Thanks to investments like these this government is improving the health and well-being of children, youth, and their families, strengthening our communities, and improving our students' learning outcomes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

### Alberta Farm Safety Centre

**Mr. Jacobs:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to inform the House of the good work being done by the Alberta Farm Safety Centre, a nonprofit organization delivering farm safety training to rural children in school classrooms in southern Alberta since 1998.

Mr. Speaker, children account for 21 per cent of farm-related deaths and 14 per cent of farm-related injuries in our province. Rural children live, work, and play every day in dangerous industrial work sites, our average family farms. In 1997 a cross-section of agricultural stakeholders in Alberta met to discuss how to assist rural children and their families to live and work safely in our agricultural communities. They determined that the number one target group should be children and that mature farmers could be reached through their children, who will be the next generation of farmers.

With these thoughts in mind the school-based safety smarts program began in 1998 in southern Alberta. Over the last decade the number of rural children receiving this farm safety program has increased from 2,230 in 1998 to 30,434 in 2007-08. Along the way the program has improved, developed, and expanded. As of September 2008 this interactive, hands-on, age-appropriate program will be available to all rural children throughout Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the Chinook health region reported a marked decrease in its total number of farm-related injuries due in part to the role of the Alberta Farm Safety Centre. Classroom testing has been done to measure student knowledge before and after the presentations. Not only did student knowledge increase significantly, but 50 per cent of the children reported going home and discussing the lessons with their families, sparking an assessment of safety procedures on their individual farms.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all members of this House to join me in congratulating the staff and instructors of the Alberta Farm Safety Centre for the excellent work they do.

Thank you.

### Oral Question Period

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

### Oil Sands Bitumen Export

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier compares having a plan for oil sands development to being Soviet. Because of that attitude there's a vacuum of leadership and planning. If this government won't plan for the future of the oil sands, big corpora-

tions will, and their plan is to ship bitumen to the U.S. for upgrading there. My question is to the Premier. What is this government doing to help upgrading happen in Alberta first and Canada second?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, first of all is trying to offset the inaccurate information and sometimes very negative position taken by the opposition party across, that at one time sent the message across that we'll totally shut down the oil sands, meaning that there will be very little to add value to.

**Dr. Taft:** Point of order.

**Mr. Stelmach:** Second is to work with the federal government and get agreement on what our national policy will be on greenhouse gas emissions because without certainty in this policy we won't see a considerable amount of money invested into value-added without having that issue settled. The third, of course, is to ensure that we have the labour force in place and long-term investment as well.

1:50

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, in recent months over \$30 billion in oil sands projects have been shelved. The most alarming part of this is that the projects most likely to be cancelled are the downstream projects such as upgraders and processing plants, which is where the real value gets added. Again to the Premier: does the Premier see this as a problem?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I identified together with this government the challenges facing Alberta in terms of value-added. We're adding to the amount of bitumen produced about 62 per cent value-added. Our goal is to get to that 72 to 75 per cent range. That's why it's imperative that we work with the federal government to put all the rules in place.

The other task that I'll be asking from the federal government is to look at the capital cost allowance that they will be eliminating. There are some other tax structures that we'll be looking to with support from the federal government.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Projects specifically designed to handle heavy oil and bitumen are under development in Indiana, Minnesota, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Wisconsin, New Mexico, Louisiana, Texas, Wyoming, Utah, Montana, and California. The pipelines to carry raw product from Alberta to the U.S. network are expanding dramatically. This government is on the brink of handing control of Alberta's wealth to the United States. To the Premier: given that upgraders are being cancelled here yet are springing up all over the U.S., will the Premier accept that this government's policies need to be changed?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again, misinformation. What the hon. member is talking about is that many of the refineries are upgrading, retooling, the reason being that there are a number of plays on the North American continent. One is that there's a concern that within the next six years Mexico may be in an import position rather than an export position because they've nationalized their oil producing and, of course, as a result not the same amount of investment flowing and some issues tied to technology. Once again, we will be doing our part to increase the amount of value-added. This is really a good-news story.

The other point here, Mr. Speaker. As we said, we're going to develop these refineries and the value upgraded responsibly,

meaning that we have to have our environmental rules in place as to what the federal government expects Alberta to do.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Well, if this government were to have a plan for developing the oil sands, then it would have a solid target for the proportion of bitumen that would be upgraded on this side of the 49th parallel. To the Premier. The industry is now warning that only 50 per cent of bitumen will be upgraded domestically. The government's target is, as far as we know, 75 per cent. Given that this government, at least this Premier, seems to dismiss planning, how is it going to meet that target?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, we are of course introducing something new in the royalty framework; that is, receiving bitumen in kind. Rather than taking the royalty, we'll take the bitumen and sell it to a merchant upgrader to be built here in the province of Alberta. That's one of the strategies that we're introducing.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thank you. Companies are making their decisions now, projects in Alberta are being cancelled now while those in the U.S. are proceeding now. Why is this government standing by while ever-expanding pipelines ship Alberta's bitumen to the U.S.?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, once again, wrong information. Notwithstanding that, there are a number of things we're doing to ensure that the level of upgrading increases in Alberta. One is around environment. You know, from a party that keeps saying that we must adopt some carbon tax or something that's going to drive away investment in this province, now all of a sudden after this last federal election, where the federal Liberals had their lowest support ever since 1867 – that tells us where the carbon tax is going. It's going down, this way, and we're going to make every effort that it doesn't reappear again, at least within the Alberta context.

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

**Dr. Taft:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. This is the government that introduced North America's first carbon tax.

This government announced \$2 billion in public spending on carbon capture and sequestration – \$2 billion – potentially a good idea, but in return for this enormous investment of public funds, did the government get any commitments from industry to keep upgrading in Alberta, or do we keep their pollution while they get our wealth?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, boy, oh boy, is this guy a little behind the times. Well, of course. Why are we developing a carbon capture strategy in this province? Because one of the issues imposed upon Alberta by the federal government is the amount of carbon produced. How do you add more value to oil or bitumen in the province without producing more carbon? Here's one solution: to capture it. This money, as I said before, the \$2 billion that we set aside, is not going to be spent overnight. We're going to work with companies to ensure that we get 2 to 1 or 3 to 1 in terms of investment from the companies to allow these projects to proceed. You can't talk about, you know, losing all these projects. By the way, all of the permitting processes are still taking place in terms of applying for the permits to build the projects. You can't on one day slam the Alberta government and slam all these companies with respect to the

environment and then the next day wonder why they're not being built.

#### **Taser Use by Law Enforcement Personnel**

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, last week I asked the Solicitor General about the use of conducted energy weapons in the province. Today I'm hitting the rewind button. The final report by the Commission for Public Complaints Against the RCMP on the use of tasers was released on June 18, 2008. Alberta guidelines have been noted as being timid by comparison. Will the Solicitor General, given this, adopt the RCMP recommendations here in Alberta?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, we've reviewed the recommendations that came forward on June 18, and it wasn't too long before that that we developed our very detailed guidelines regarding the use of this particular tool. They are the strictest in the country, and at this point in time we plan on sticking to those guidelines.

**Mr. Hehr:** Almost a year ago the Premier told the leader of the third party that the Justice minister and the Solicitor General would review the process surrounding the use of tasers in this province. I was wondering what specific progress has been made on the review of this process.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've already indicated, slightly longer than a year ago we did do a very comprehensive review on the use of this particular tool. Again, we have some of the strictest guidelines in place in this country, and we're sticking with them.

**Mr. Hehr:** Mr. Speaker, I was wondering whether the Solicitor General would commit to a public inquiry on the use of tasers in order to ease the public's concern over the use of this crime-fighting tool.

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm assuming that these questions are a result of a couple of unfortunate incidents that happened in the last week in our province. The Alberta serious incident response team is conducting an independent investigation into both of these incidents, and there will also be a fatality inquiry, again, probably in regard to both of these. At the end of those inquiries we will review our guidelines to make sure that Albertans are protected to the best of our ability.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, followed by the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

#### **Oil Sands Bitumen Export** (continued)

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. While the world faces an impending recession, Alberta will not be immune. Four upgrader projects in Alberta have now been shelved due to a deteriorating economy, yet the construction of massive pipelines to export bitumen to U.S. upgraders continues. [interjections] No. I'll do it better. Those pipelines will export Alberta jobs as well. To the Premier: why have you broken your promise to reduce bitumen exports to the United States? Why aren't you standing up for the jobs of Albertans?

2:00

**Mr. Stelmach:** Well, can we just rewind the tape from a few questions before? In this particular case, again, irony. His national leader flies across Fort McMurray, says: shut her down. Oh, and by the way, now he's changed. He said: I didn't really say to shut her

down but to just put a moratorium. Just put a moratorium, whatever that means. So much for job protection, which I would expect would come from the New Democratic Party, which has had the same name now, New Democratic, for about 40 years.

Anyway, go ahead with the questions.

**Mr. Mason:** Nearly as ironic as having the word “progressive” in your name, Mr. Premier.

It’s clear that thousands of Alberta jobs will be lost as a result of this government’s neglect, and the Premier’s attempt to deflect attention by talking about the last federal election will not satisfy those people. The jobs lost may be as high as 10,000 construction jobs, jobs that are going south along with the unprocessed bitumen. To the Premier: how will you be able to look Alberta workers in the eye and tell them that their jobs have been exported to the United States and you did nothing about it?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, I will look all Alberta workers confidently and truthfully in the eye and say that in spite of the push back by both of these parties, not only environmental policy but new direction that we set way back in this House in terms of legislation, in terms of putting caps on all of the larger carbon/greenhouse gas emitters, putting in the \$15 a tonne levy: all of those things brought some certainty and predictability into the investment to produce further not only bitumen but value-added in this province.

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

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This Premier promised Albertans that he would stop the increase in unprocessed bitumen to the United States. That is a promise that he has broken. It wasn’t supposed to happen, but the Premier is letting it happen. He’s just twiddling his thumbs. My question is to the Premier. Why have you broken your promise to Alberta workers and their families to protect their jobs and process the bitumen in Alberta?

**Mr. Stelmach:** Mr. Speaker, it’s odd, you know, coming from the party that has very close ties to labour and to an organization that spent \$2.2 million in the last provincial election campaign, I think, focused either on me personally or on this Progressive Conservative Party. That says a lot about the kind of working relationships that we have to improve with all of the unions that are working in Fort McMurray and also the hundreds of thousands of Canadians that depend on Alberta’s economy. We have a lot of work ahead of ourselves. I don’t hold any grudges against those that, you know, supported that kind of campaign during the election. We want to work with them to make sure that the next generation has the same opportunities that the workers that are working today have in this province.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

#### Liquor Sales to Minors

**Mr. Rogers:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has set as one of its priorities helping citizens to feel safer in their communities. We all see news reports, it seems with increasing frequency, of young people being involved in violent attacks against each other, and in many cases it appears that one contributing factor to this violence is the consumption of alcohol by minors. My first question is to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. What is this government doing to prevent retail liquor stores and licensed premises from selling and serving liquor to minors?

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to ensure that there is no confusion on this particular item, I want to point out that the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission has a very long-standing policy that requires all liquor licensees and their staff to ask for photo ID from patrons who appear to be under the age of 25 years. We are very serious about keeping liquor out of the hands of minors, and the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission conducts inspections and audits of retail liquor stores and drinking establishments throughout Alberta to ensure compliance.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: does the AGLC have measures in place to adequately detect violations of this policy, and does the government have any indication that the under-25 policy is actually working?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, the audits that I mentioned consist of sending young-looking but legal-age adults who are employed by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission into liquor stores and drinking establishments to purchase alcohol. These inspectors personally check on the sales practices, including whether or not retail staff are asking for ID.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, these inspectors routinely visit licensed establishments to monitor compliance with regulations prohibiting minors from entering the premises or obtaining liquor. As a point of information, the AGLC inspectors conduct over 25,000 inspections annually.

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

**Mr. Rogers:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is for the same minister. Mr. Minister, when a retailer or a licensed premise is found to be providing liquor to minors or failing to check ID, is there a significant penalty to that licensee?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Again, Mr. Speaker, penalties for these infractions are significant. If one of our inspected agencies is not asking for ID, for example, the penalty to a licensee for one offence could be a warning, could be a fine of \$750, or a three-day suspension of a licence. In cases where an underage person is actually served liquor, penalties could be a fine of \$2,000, an eight-day suspension, or cancellation of the licence.

Mr. Speaker, preventing underage drinking is a very important issue to this government. The under-25 ID policy and regulation inspections by these inspectors and the police help keep our youth safe.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

#### Cardiac Surgery Wait Times

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regarding a question in this House on the firing of the Capital health board, the minister of health suggested that the health delivery system is as good or better than it was prior to the firing of the board in May. We have taken a good look at his suggestion, and he is totally wrong. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness, and it’s not a laughing matter. How can you say that the health delivery system is as good or better than it was, Mr. Minister, when in May, before

you fired the Capital health board, 90 per cent of cardiac surgery patients with urgent needs waited eight weeks. Now under your Health Services Board . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister. [interjection] The hon. minister has the floor.

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly certain that the member has his numbers correct, but I will check into that. You know, there are a variety of things that go into wait times, and one of them is the availability of not only personnel but of facilities. I'll respond to the member when I do some checking into that.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again, Mr. Speaker, this information is on the Alberta wait-list registry, which is linked to his department.

Now, my second question to the minister: why have wait times for cardiac surgery in the Capital health region doubled from eight weeks when you fired the board to over 17 weeks now?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure those numbers are correct, and I will check into them.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Again to the same minister: what does the government consider to be a safe wait time target for cardiac surgery?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've said consistently in this House that our objective is to create a health system in this province where we have improved access, where we have a patient-focused system, and future sustainability, and that's what we're driving towards.

#### Forest Industry Sustainability

**Mr. Drysdale:** Mr. Speaker, my constituency is among many in Alberta that count forestry as a leading industry. The forest industry is struggling, and people are concerned for their future. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. What is his department doing to ensure forestry remains a cornerstone of Alberta's economy?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the government of Alberta is committed to maintaining a healthy, globally competitive forestry industry. We recognize the very significant contribution the forest industry makes to this province, over \$10 billion in products annually and over 40,000 jobs. To support this and contribute to this record of achievement, the Forestry Industry Sustainability Committee's report, the 11 recommendations made there for cost competitiveness, has been reviewed, accepted, and the 11 recommendations are being implemented.

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question to the same minister: what other actions are being considered beyond the interim recommendations?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, today's forestry industry operates in a global market environment that's totally different than the market that the rules were originally set out for in the '60s and '80s. To succeed in the new global marketplace, we need a new model forestry plan in Alberta. It needs to respond to three new changes: one, global competitiveness; two, competing land uses here in

Alberta; and three, the much higher environmental expectations that Albertans have of the industry and of this government. We're delivering all three of those in the final FISC report, that I've received recently and am reviewing with other ministers at the moment.

2:10

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

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second supplemental question to the same minister: when can Albertans expect these recommendations for change to become reality?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, the government is well aware that the industry is in dire straits. We're moving with all deliberate speed on these issues. As I said, the 11 recommendations of the interim report are being implemented as we speak. We're reviewing the recommendations of the final report with other ministers, and I plan to report on those to the government in the coming months. I will say here, as I've said to other ministers in the industry, that all recommendations must be and will be compliant with the softwood lumber agreement.

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

#### Cardiac Surgery Wait Times

(continued)

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, since this government fired the Capital health authority in May, wait times for cardiac surgeries have more than doubled, from eight weeks to over 17 weeks for those with urgent need.

**Dr. Taft:** You can't go to the Mazankowski.

**Mr. MacDonald:** No, you can't go to the Mazankowski.

My first question is to the minister of health. How does the Edmonton region compare to the rest of the province with regard to cardiac surgery wait times?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this member is asking a whole bunch of statistical questions that, I would suggest, he should put on the Order Paper if he wants a proper answer.

**Mr. MacDonald:** The minister of health is dodging the issue because he knows his policies have failed the province and the sick people in it.

Again to the minister: does the minister consider it's fair that patients in the Edmonton region wait up to 17 weeks for some cardiac surgeries when patients in Calgary wait only one week?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, this particular member has been so incorrect in most of his preambles that I'm not going to acknowledge that the numbers that he is putting out there are correct. I will check into them, and I'll report back to the House. If he really wants to get the detailed numbers, then put a written question on the Order Paper.

**Mr. MacDonald:** The detailed numbers are on your website, and if you would only look at your website instead of trying to privatize health care in this province, citizens would be better off.

Again to the minister: why is this government risking the lives of Edmontonians by making them wait twice as long for cardiac



surgery when compared to the service they used to get before you fired the Capital health authority?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, nobody's life is being put at risk, and it is irresponsible for this member to say that.

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

### Arts Funding

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Calgary Arts Development Authority released their capital plan for arts facilities. Other cities are also looking at ways to improve facilities for their artists. My question is for the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. What have you done to improve facilities for Alberta's emerging and professional performing artists?

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

**Mr. Blackett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government created and accepted a cultural policy last year that helps guide me and my department on where we need to go for a strong arts and cultural sector. One of those pillars is building capacity, and with the strong support of government MLAs we had the opportunity to fund millions of dollars for important construction projects, including the Winspear Centre and the Citadel Theatre in Edmonton and the Jack Singer Concert Hall and the Lunchbox Theatre in Calgary.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first question to the same minister: funding these facilities in major centres is fine, but what is available for performing arts fans outside of Alberta's two big cities?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, one of the other pillars of our cultural policy is access for all Albertans irrespective of their geographical position and their socioeconomic status. The member brings up a great point. I've had the honour of visiting terrific performing arts facilities: in Medicine Hat the Esplanade, the Lamphouse theatre in Canmore, the Empress Theatre in Fort Macleod, the Bailey Theatre in Camrose, et cetera. They are pervasive all across rural Alberta.

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

**Mr. Quest:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question to the same minister: patrons may support their favourite troupe or facility, but what would the minister say to those who don't believe that public funds for the performing arts are a good investment?

**Mr. Blackett:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems my colleagues wanted me to mention the Rosebud Theatre. I forgot.

The funding for the arts is a good investment because it's a return. A 2006 national survey revealed that private-sector support for the performing arts in Alberta was just under \$20 million, which was higher per capita than in any other province in Canada. The same survey revealed that Albertans spend \$194.7 million on live performing arts, which is higher per capita than in any other province in the country.

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

### Driver Licensing

**Ms Blakeman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. While the government is trying to draw skilled and educated workers to the province, many have to wait six to eight weeks to find out whether or not they can receive an exemption for their international drivers' licences. Currently many countries such as Australia, Norway, and Portugal do not have reciprocal agreements with the province; therefore, people coming from these places are, well, left to walk. My question is to the Minister of Service Alberta. What countries has the minister signed agreements with since I brought this issue to her attention?

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

**Mrs. Klimchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The whole issue of reciprocal agreements is with the Minister of Transportation, so I'd refer that to Minister Ouellette.

**Mr. Ouellette:** I missed what your question was, hon. member, but we do have agreements in place on the reciprocal ones, and on the nonreciprocal ones we have put out a paper on how we can make them work.

**Ms Blakeman:** I guess to the Minister of Transportation, then. Since there is a desperate need for skilled labour in this province, leaving new Albertans without drivers' licences for several months while they apply for a new one is a major oversight by this government. What has the minister done to speed up the process for establishing reciprocal agreements with the additional countries?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, we have made lots more agreements and brought some up to date. Also, we have – I forget what we call it right now – something in place so that when they come in, all they have to do is have their paperwork together to show that they've had a driver's licence in whatever country they've come from and that they've driven for two years there. They can gladly write the tests here and drive the tests and get whatever licence they need.

**Ms Blakeman:** That's actually not true, Mr. Minister. They have to apply for an exemption to the process or they end up having to wait for a period of time.

What's the goal moving forward from here? What are the new countries that the minister says he's signed with since I asked the question in the spring? What are those new countries? Could he tell us?

**Mr. Ouellette:** Mr. Speaker, I'll have to get back to her on those countries' names. I don't have them at the tip of my fingers or the top of my head right now. But I will tell you that she is absolutely wrong when she says that they can't do exactly what I said in my last answer.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

### Homeless Children

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This summer the homeless count in Calgary showed that the number of homeless kids had tripled since 2002. According to the Calgary Homeless Foundation 71 children in this government's care ended up in shelters just last year. To the Minister of Children and Youth Services. This is an

alarming trend. We need real solutions, and you appear to have none. How can you continue to justify your ministry's inaction when children are sleeping on the streets and the number of them keeps going up?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure the House that there hasn't been any inaction. Those numbers that she referred to are very concerning. I can tell you that out of the thousands of kids we have in care, a small number of them choose to leave their placements. But the most important message that I can give this House is that we do not give up on these kids. The first thing that we do is try to find them. The second thing we do is take a look at other placements for them, whether it's a different foster home, whether it's group care, independent living. As well, we are looking to offer them other services that they may need.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I would say that 71 kids in one city is not a small number.

While the number of homeless youth tripled in Calgary, the budget for keeping children safe barely kept pace with inflation. Now, we need real answers for these kids, and all we're getting from this minister is bureaucratic pablum. Why haven't you done anything to help these kids off the street?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first thing I'd like to say is that I'm not sure about the numbers she's referring to, but one child on the street is one too many; I'll say that. We do currently provide \$3.3 million to nine youth shelters across the province. It's also worth noting that last year we had a review on youth shelters, and as a result of that we moved forward on some of the recommendations. We also created a working committee with CFSA CEOs and youth shelters to address the youth shelter issues.

2:20

**Ms Notley:** Well, youth shelters are not where these kids should be anyway, and more committees is the last thing that we need.

Now, wages for most front-line workers helping children at risk are at least 30 per cent below direct government workers doing the same job. As I said, meetings and consultations and committees mean nothing if the situation remains exactly the same months and years later, which it does. To the minister: why won't you commit today that you will eliminate the wage gap between contracted front-line workers and equivalent direct government staff?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The first thing I'd say as to shelters: I agree; shelters are not where these kids should be. I'd just point out to the House that we have a number of initiatives that are happening. We have a high-risk youth strategy that's offering wraparound services. We have independent living programs. We're also pushing the advancing futures bursary to help kids in care get into postsecondary education, and we have child and youth support programs, to mention a few.

With respect to the comment about the contracted agencies I think last week I updated the House several times on where we are with the working group that's taking a look at the wages for contracted agencies.

## Sunday Hunting

**Mr. Mitzel:** Mr. Speaker, this year hunting is now allowed on Sundays throughout the province for game birds and a majority of the province for big game. At a time when we're trying to reduce impacts on the land, can the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development explain why we would want to increase hunting opportunities in Alberta?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat for his excellent question on this excellent new initiative. In fact, I did a little myself yesterday. This new policy initiative is a response to the significant increase in the number of big game animals in Alberta – elk, moose, and deer – which is a good thing, but also a corresponding increase in automobile accidents and crop damage, which is a bad thing. So we need an increased hunter harvest. The best way to achieve that increased hunter harvest, we believe, is to allow Sunday hunting. Most other provinces have done that. The majority of Albertans work Monday to Friday, so giving them that extra day, two days, to hunt is the fair way to do this.

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

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Can the minister explain the rationale behind big game hunting on Sundays and the fact that it's available in wildlife management unit 300 and not in the adjacent 400, which includes the forests and mountain area of southern Alberta?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. The WMU in the 300s is mostly private land, so landowners there that don't want Sunday hunting can simply say: don't come on my land on Sunday. The WMU in the 400s, as the hon. member correctly identified, tends to be Crown lands in the eastern slopes. We did not want conflicts between hunters and other users where there are grazing lease operators or recreational users in the months of September and October. So no Sunday hunting in those Crown areas until November, when most of the recreational users are gone and the cattle have been brought in.

**Mr. Mitzel:** My last supplemental is to the same minister. Mr. Minister, can you assure the people in my constituency, the landowners and the municipalities, that their concerns were heard? They have not expressed to me their support regarding big game hunting on Sundays.

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We did extensive public consultation on this issue. We sent questionnaires to all the rural MDs. We had an 80 per cent response rate; 70 per cent of the respondents were in favour of Sunday hunting. Most of the opposition to it was in the southern areas. That's why we have not allowed big game hunting on Sundays in the southern areas, the 100 WMU, which covers all of the area, in fact, that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat represents.

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

### Sexually Transmitted Diseases

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the health minister and relate to the fourfold increase in sexually transmitted diseases, especially syphilis, in the last four years and raise the question in relation to the loss of four public health officials, also, in this last year, some of whom have indicated a progressive loss of interest in prevention by this minister. As the rise of sexually transmitted diseases clearly represents a public health failure, what, Mr. Minister, have you done to increase the staffing to ensure that it doesn't continue?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've dealt with that issue in the Legislature on a number of occasions. It is an alarming statistic that no one in this province should be proud of. What we have engaged in are several initiatives in the areas where there's a high incidence, and they're being deployed through the regional districts of Alberta Health Services. The final comment I would make is that we really have to ensure that people accept some personal responsibility in this area.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. With adequate public health staffing there should be a consistent short interval between the diagnosis of the case and the treatment of the contacts. Can the minister comment on the trend in delay between the treatment of the case and the treatment of the contacts in this province?

**Mr. Liepert:** Well, Mr. Speaker, my belief would be that any time a sexually transmitted disease is determined by a physician, the treatment would be immediate. If this particular member has a situation where he feels there has been undue delay, I'd be happy to hear about it.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it's been over a year since we had a chief medical officer of health in the province and we've let four other key medical officers in Alberta Health go, can the minister tell Albertans what his commitment is to public health and prevention?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, this member will be well aware that approximately a month or a month and a half ago we rolled out a new model for public health in this province. That will make it more clear as to the roles and responsibilities of the chief medical officer. As a result, the search for a new permanent chief medical health officer is nearing completion, and hopefully we'll be able to make that announcement in the next month or so.

### Draft Land-use Framework

**Mrs. Sarich:** Mr. Speaker, when the draft land-use framework was released last spring, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development told Albertans to expect a final framework this fall. This has not happened yet although this is a policy that the minister himself says is needed. My question is to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. How close are we to seeing the actual delivery of the framework to Albertans?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to report to the

hon. member that the land-use framework is on track for release before the end of this year. Of course, we've undertaken extensive public consultation over the draft that we released in May. We've consulted with the public, with stakeholders, and with aboriginal groups in Alberta. In addition, we'll be making some changes that I'll be taking back to the caucus for approval before the release.

Thank you.

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

**Mrs. Sarich:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. What should businesses, municipalities, and landowners who have to make land-use decisions do while awaiting the government's land-use plan?

**Dr. Morton:** Mr. Speaker, both the government of Alberta and our municipal districts have processes and systems in place for making land-use decisions. We're encouraging everybody to continue to work as usual as we're in the process of developing the regional plans. Our timelines for developing the regional plans have not changed. We're putting in place today the advisory committees for both the northeast and the south. We expect to have those regional plans out by 2010 and the rest of the regions by 2012. When these come into place, municipal governments will have to align their decision-making processes with the regional plan in which they live.

**Mrs. Sarich:** Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the same minister. Is the land-use framework going to have the financial resources to move forward as an effective land management plan?

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

**Dr. Morton:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer to that is absolutely yes. This government has exercised foresight in its budgeting. We have provided a total of \$42 million over the next three years for implementation of the land-use framework: \$7 million start-up this year, up to \$15 million next year, and \$20 million in 2010-2011. I realize that's a considerable amount of money, but it's worth less than the important things that we're protecting with the land-use framework.

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

### Safety of Sour Gas Wells

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A very disturbing assault is being carried out against the citizens of Tomahawk, something that affects not only the citizens of this community but specifically their children. Highpine Energy wants to drill sour gas wells not just near the community but within three kilometres of the local school. This is a 16 per cent concentration of hydrogen sulphide, enough to be deadly in the event of a blowout. To the Minister of Energy. Section 4(c) of the Oil and Gas Conservation Act speaks to the development of oil and gas resources in the public interest. How can putting schoolchildren in harm's way possibly be in the public interest?

2:30

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

**Mr. Knight:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. member opposite would know very well that the number one concern of the Energy Resources Conservation Board in the

province of Alberta is the safety of Albertans. Every application that comes forward is tested and tested very severely by that first consideration.

**Mr. Chase:** Ninety-eight per cent of applications are rubber-stamped by this government.

To the minister of health. An expert at the ERCB hearing stated that children at the school at the very least may experience nausea and headaches in the event of an unplanned release from the Tomahawk sour gas wells. I ask the minister: is this an acceptable risk for any parent? Would you allow your children to be exposed to this risk?

**Mr. Liepert:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware that the Energy Resources Conservation Board, which, I should remind this member, is a quasi-judicial body – it is not the government of Alberta – is conducting a hearing in this particular situation. So I would suggest the member spend some time in Tomahawk and make his case to the board.

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

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. I did intervene in the Compton hearing, and that's a good suggestion, Mr. Minister.

To the Solicitor General and the Minister of Public Security: does the minister agree with the ruling of the ERCB in allowing drilling of sour gas wells with a potentially deadly hydrogen sulphide concentration so close to a school? What are you doing to advocate for these children and their parents? Is this not a matter of public security?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if that question should be coming to the Solicitor General. As the previous minister said, the issue is before the ERCB. They've had a hearing on it.

I guess that to respond to the other question, I believe that I very effectively represent my constituents, and in the feedback I am getting, they appreciate the representation they are getting.

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

#### Offender Supervision

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the government's recent announcements of 183 more police officers, statistics show that crime in the province may not decrease soon. The 2007 safe communities task force referred to the criminal justice system as a revolving door. Too many offenders are caught, charged, and released only to commit the same crimes again. My questions are all to the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security. What is being done to address the serious issue of repeat offenders?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, the safe communities initiative gives us a clear road map to reduce crime in Alberta. In response to one of its recommendations, just last week our Premier announced a new program that tackles the serious problem of repeat offenders. It is a co-operative effort between my ministry and Alberta Justice that targets the 15 per cent of criminals who commit 60 per cent of the crime in this province. It is the focused, comprehensive approach that balances a need to keep offenders in custody and give them a chance to break the cycle of offending and revictimizing Albertans.

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How will this new program work?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, a dedicated team of police, sheriffs, probation officers, and justice officials will target 60 repeat offenders, 20 from Edmonton and Calgary and 20 from the rest of the province. This team will monitor or supervise those offenders while they are in the community. Law enforcement officials will provide timely information to a central unit that will prepare and continuously upgrade comprehensive bail packages for Crown prosecutors. Any individual who reoffends will quickly find themselves back behind bars.

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

**Mr. Johnston:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question: how will the new bail packages help keep these offenders from committing the same crimes again and again?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, this program targets offenders who frequently commit relatively minor crimes. The new bail packages will give Crown prosecutors current and extensive information to present at bail hearings. This will include information such as the offender's sentencing history, past bail applications and compliance, and outstanding charges against the offender. As well, having a more complete picture of each offender will help ensure that an offender is referred to the appropriate social agencies and supports. The ultimate goal is to break the cycle of repeat offences and ensure that our communities remain safe.

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

#### Homeless Children

*(continued)*

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, my questions are going to sound very familiar to ones that have already been asked; however, I do think that the subject is worthy of further discussion. There's a growing number of homeless people in Alberta, but there's also a growing number of homeless youth. A youth's teenage years often determine the type of future that they will have. I would ask the Minister of Children and Youth Services: can the minister tell us how many children who are being supported by the ministry have chosen to leave their placements and are currently living on the streets, not just in Calgary but in Alberta, to date in 2008?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suggest that she submit a question, and I have no difficulty in finding that number out. But I can tell you that out of the thousands of kids that we have in care, it is a small number but still concerning.

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

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you. What initiatives is the minister making to help ensure that proper placements are made for the children so that they don't think that their best option is returning to the streets or to shelters?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, like I said earlier, first of all, we do not give up on these kids, so we always look for other placements that might work better for them. But this just kind of segues into another comment about the placements in general. We do have under way – we’re just entering our third week – a major foster care campaign. Some good news I would like to just share with this member is that we’re starting to get a lot of interest. We’re targeting 400 spaces across the province. We’ve got a pretty good ratio right now, but that would really help us out with placement choices. In Calgary alone we’ve had a hundred calls of interest . . .

**The Speaker:** I think we’ll have to go on, hon. minister.  
The hon. member.

**Ms Pastoor:** Thank you for that. It’s certainly a good first step. The other thing would be taking children into custody. The ministry should be a last resort of the government. What is the minister doing to help ensure that the proper support is given to families before and after their children are taken into custody?

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

**Ms Tarchuk:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think this member touches on a good point. That’s really what a large part of this ministry is all about; that is, creating programs that support families and giving kids a good head start, so that’s everything from our parent link centres, our FCSS programs, our child care programs. As you know, we focus a lot of our intervention programs on enhancement, so we can get money into the families before a crisis. I think that as we’re talking today about these high-risk kids, we can’t forget to talk about everything and how we have to focus on the early years with all of these kids.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont, followed by the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater.

#### Violence in Licensed Premises

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Acts of violence in our unlicensed premises seem to be reported in the media almost daily. In such cases patrons and sometimes bystanders are injured when violence erupts near a bar and then is carried into the surrounding neighbourhoods. Some violence, unfortunately, is the result of excessive consumption of alcohol. My question to the Alberta Solicitor General and Minister of Public Security, who is also responsible for Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission: can you please tell Albertans what is being done to address violence in licensed premises in regard to overconsumption of alcohol?

**Mr. Lindsay:** Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue that must be approached on many fronts, with government, municipalities, police agencies, the hospitality industry, and bar patrons all playing a role. We have several ongoing initiatives in our province to reduce violence in and around licensed premises, including mandatory training for security staff and those who sell or serve alcohol. The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission has also set a minimum price on drinks, set a limit on happy hour, and limited the number of drinks a patron can possess after 1 a.m. in order to reduce binge drinking.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental is to the same minister. Many of the problems we hear about seem to be the result of an altercation inside a licensed premise that escalates into violence of many kinds. How does the training program for door security staff address this issue?

**Mr. Lindsay:** ProTect training provides a wide range of issues, including how to identify potential problems before they become violent. Security staff learn how to deal with patrons who are abusive or threatening and how to defuse a situation peacefully. ProTect certification is mandatory for security staff as of January 1, 2009.

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

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A final question to the same minister: what’s being done to ensure that the workers who require liquor service training actually successfully complete the program?

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

2:40

**Mr. Lindsay:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Currently only one ProServe-trained staff member is required per shift in a licensed premise. As of January 1, 2010, ProServe training is mandatory for everyone who works directly or indirectly with the sale or service of liquor. ProServe certification is required for all staff of licensed premises, including servers, greeters, bartenders, supervisors, security staff, owners, and retail clerks. At this time there are nearly 37,000 people in the province with liquor service training.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, that was 108 questions and responses today.

In 30 seconds from now we’ll continue with Members’ Statements.

#### Members’ Statements (continued)

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

#### Support for Vulnerable Albertans

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Who cares? Charles Dickens in a series of novels described a very bleak period of history in Victorian England a century and a half ago. He described the poorhouses, the historical equivalent of our overcrowded shelters. In his most famous novel, *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens’ protagonist, Scrooge, when confronted by two gentlemen seeking alms for the less fortunate, replied that if the poor rejected the government’s aid, they should simply die “and decrease the surplus population.”

Fast-forward 150 years to present-day Alberta, where food banks are now popping up in small, rural communities; where 12-year-olds, many out of necessity, are forced to work to support their families; where disabled individuals, their families, and their few remaining support workers, having basically been abandoned by this government, are forced to survive under substandard conditions: affordable housing is almost nonexistent; 24/7 care is only available if the individual is institutionalized, which is not only more costly than in-home support but severs family ties.

Disability advocates are asking to be treated with dignity. On Tuesday, October 28, they shared their stories on the steps of the Legislature. The ongoing theme of the rally was SOS: throw us a lifeline. Parents told of having to give up their jobs because they couldn’t find caregivers. They couldn’t even obtain minimal relief

in the form of temporary respite care. Support workers who are devoted to their clients weren't able to subsist on the substandard wages and were therefore forced, for the sake of their own and their family's well-being, to abandon those whom they had cared for. We heard of disabled individuals being dropped off at homeless shelters or left at emergency departments because their families had no other option. If the test of a society is how it looks after its most vulnerable, then the Alberta government has failed.

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

#### U of C Biomedical Engineering Research Programs

**Mr. Cao:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few years ago I had the unique opportunity to visit the bioengineering research lab at the U of C. I was given a pair of special goggles and gloves to virtually walk into a heart and to navigate myself among the microscopic structures of bone. Now this has become reality in some practical use.

Researchers such as Drs. Naweed Syed, Garnette Sutherland, and Kristina Rinker are making discoveries that will help improve our lives and the lives of our children and grandchildren. They are leading the way by establishing a national biomedical engineering and innovation centre at the university campus. Dr. Syed made headlines in 2004 after successfully connecting brain cells to a silicon chip, showing that living cells could communicate directly to an electronic device. This discovery has exciting implications, including the ability to control artificial limbs.

The potential raised by the U of C for Alberta is vast. Estimates are that by 2020 Alberta will be the leading jurisdiction in biomedical engineering research with an \$8 billion industry employing 50,000 people. The U of C and its researchers are contributing to making Alberta a world-renowned research centre. For this I would like to thank them and encourage them to continue their paths of success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### Introduction of Bills

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

#### Bill 43 Emergency Health Services Act

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and introduce Bill 43, the Emergency Health Services Act.

Ambulance services are health services and should be part of the provincial health care system. The Emergency Health Services Act provides a framework for a co-ordinated provincial system of emergency health services and allows for new models of service delivery to be included in the future. This proposed legislation and the changes which it provides are an important part of our government's plan to create a health system that better meets the needs of Albertans.

I move first reading of Bill 43. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 43 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 43, the Emergency Health Services Act, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

#### Bill 44 Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2008

**Mr. Denis:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce Bill 44, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2008.

This proposed legislation clarifies the obligations of pharmacy proprietors and pharmacists when providing pharmacy services to Albertans. It also clarifies the authority of the Alberta College of Pharmacists while regulating the provision of pharmacy services. In particular, the legislation clarifies regulatory requirements regarding a pharmacy's record-keeping and record-producing obligations; the College of Pharmacists' inspection, audit, and investigative authority; and the college's authority to share such information with regulatory bodies, governments, and law-enforcement agencies. The amendments proposed in the act also provide for continued operation of licensed mail-order pharmacies.

I therefore move first reading of Bill 44. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 44 read a first time]

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill 44, the Pharmacy and Drug Amendment Act, 2008, be moved onto the Order Paper under Government Bills and Orders.

[Motion carried]

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

#### Bill 45 Statistics Bureau Amendment Act, 2008

**Mr. Goudreau:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 45, the Statistics Bureau Amendment Act, 2008.

The amendments to the current Statistics Bureau Act establish the Office of Statistics and Information. The purpose of the office is to consolidate and develop official statistics and other key government data. The proposed changes will better reflect the role of the Office of Statistics and Information as Alberta's official statistical agency.

In addition, the proposed amendments will update the act, making it more consistent with other provincial jurisdictions. Included in such changes is authority for the office to enter into data-collection agreements with the government of Canada, other provincial departments, municipalities, and organizations. The amendments to the Statistics Bureau Act will ensure that the best information is available when making policy decisions.

I move first reading of Bill 45, the Statistics Bureau Amendment Act, 2008. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 45 read a first time]

#### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Lindsay:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with the Gaming and Liquor Act and the Government Accountability Act I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of the '07-08 Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission annual report. Overall, '07-08 was

a successful year, an active year for the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission with good progress made on its business plan and its goals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table 102 copies of correspondence from my constituents in Bonnyville-Cold Lake regarding the widening of highway 55 north of Bonnyville near Iron River.

2:50

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

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon, and they're both associated with my questions to the hon. minister of health. The first is the Alberta wait-list registry trend report, September 2008, cardiac surgery 90th percentile wait time, urgency 1.

The second tabling I have is also from the Alberta wait-list registry. It's the monthly trends by region, physician specialties, for the 13 reporting months ended September 2008.

Thank you.

**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 three letters regarding the reports of the Child and Youth Advocate. These letters are from Randy Harris, president of the Alberta College of Social Workers; John Dunn, executive director of the Foster Care Council of Canada; and Danielle Monroe, a constituent of mine, who writes that she is "astounded by the negligence of our government when it comes to the children in their care."

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition on a purported point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Allegations against a Member

**Dr. Taft:** Well, yes. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to rise on this, Mr. Speaker. I will refer here to 23(h) and (i) from our Standing Orders and to *Beauchesne* 494. Just for the record 23 refers to a point of order when a member

(h) makes allegations against another Member;

(i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;

and *Beauchesne* 494 refers to an imputation of intentional falsehood. It says here that "no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible." You will have the entire paragraph there. I won't read it all into the record, but that's the particular component I'm referring to.

Now, I don't have the Blues in front of me, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure you will in due course. Going from memory, what the Premier indicated was that our caucus has advocated shutting down or stopping development of the oil sands. He certainly inferred – and I don't have the exact language – that we wanted to see the oil sands shut down. That's simply untrue, and that's why I'm standing under these particular standing orders and the *Beauchesne* reference.

We are long on record for advocating for planned development of the oil sands. I could go on at great length, but I won't. Out of respect for the Assembly I will just cite a couple of examples. One is a media release from earlier this year in which we speak directly

to responsibly managing the pace of oil sands development. We're clear there and we've always been clear that the oil sands are a great treasure for this province, not to be shut down but to be developed with a plan that addresses environmental issues – water, air, and land use – labour issues, infrastructure issues, and economic issues and that there needs to be a plan such as that advocated by people as diverse as the former leader of this government Peter Lougheed and chambers of commerce, the municipal council of Wood Buffalo, and many, many others.

We need a plan for development. We don't need a plan for shutting down. In fact, our point has been that if we don't have a plan, we are increasing the risk of a reaction that will lead to a shutdown of the oil sands or to a stop of their development.

The other example I will use was actually a private member's bill brought forward by one of our members, Bill 211, Planning for the Future of Communities Act. In this particular bill we make it very clear that we need to plan for the future in a coherent manner. We don't need to shut down the oil sands, but we do need to plan for their development.

Mr. Speaker, I just think it is demeaning to this Assembly, it's misleading, it's in fact outright untrue for the Premier to allege that we in our caucus have said that the oil sands should be shut down. We have not said any such thing. It's clearly in violation of *Beauchesne* and of our standing orders, and the simple, honourable thing for the Premier, or somebody on his behalf, to do would be to simply withdraw this statement and not make it again.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In reflecting on sections 23(h), (i), and (j), I would note that section 23 clearly states that there may be a point of order if there are "allegations against another Member" or if a particular person in the House "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member" or "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." That is the point, I think, being brought forward by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

However, I don't think that there were any allegations specifically brought against one specific other member, which is what (h) and (i) refer to. Secondly, I don't think there was any insulting language that caused any massive uproar in the Assembly or any kind of interruption to the proceedings, necessarily, other than the point itself, nor was there anything abusive stated.

Now, it may be the case that there is a misunderstanding of what the Liberal opposition policy is with respect to the oil sands, and I think the hon. leader has just explained that they are fully in favour, or at least in favour, of the oil sands. What they're after is a policy regarding development. There are such statements like that on record in this House. Various ministers responsible for various parts of the oil sands have in fact enunciated what our plans are in that respect, and they could certainly be visited at any time.

*Beauchesne* 409 clearly states, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, that aspersions would need to be cast if in fact a point of order were to be supported. Section 409(7), for example, states: "A question must adhere to the proprieties of the House, in terms of inferences, imputing motives or casting aspersions upon persons within the House or out of it." That's under the section that deals with the rules that have traditionally guided the House. I don't think there were any aspersions cast in that respect.

I could go on with section 486(1) about the tone and the manner. There was clearly nothing in the tone or the manner that imputed anything that would cause aspersions to be even thought of as having been cast. Under 487 of *Beauchesne* I would argue that there was no threatening language used either.

So from my point of view I fail to see the argument for a particular point of order at this point. There may be a point of dissension, Mr. Speaker. There may be a point of disagreement; certainly, a point of clarification, which now stands corrected or stands clarified by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. However, to me this appears to be more a statement of misunderstanding, but I will await the ruling of the chair.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The chair is prepared to rule. Those lucid arguments that have just been forwarded by all hon. members with lucid quotations and the like are very helpful. First of all, the Leader of the Official Opposition quoted from *Beauchesne* 494. He used several words; perhaps the whole quotation might be of greater benefit. The section says:

Acceptance of the Word of a Member

494. It has been formally ruled by Speakers that statements by Members respecting themselves and particularly within their own knowledge must be accepted. It is not unparliamentary temperately to criticize statements made by Members as being contrary to the facts; but no imputation of intentional falsehood is permissible. On rare occasions this may result in the House having to accept two contradictory accounts of the same incident.

What was said today by the leader of the government was:

Mr. Speaker, first of all, it's trying to offset the inaccurate information and sometimes very negative position taken by the opposition party across that at one time sent the message across that we'll totally shut down the oil sands, meaning that there will be very little to add value to.

*Beauchesne* 409, 487, 494 have been quoted, and perhaps it will just bring this matter to a head with a quotation from the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 433.

The Speaker ensures that replies adhere to the dictates of order, decorum and parliamentary language. The Speaker, however, is not responsible for the quality or content of replies to questions. In most instances, when a point of order or a question of privilege has been raised in regard to a response to an oral question, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is a disagreement among Members over the facts surrounding the issue. As such, these matters are more a question of debate and do not constitute a breach of the rules or of privilege.

We've had an opportunity for clarification, and I think this matter now comes to an end.

3:00

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

**Mr. MacDonald:** Point of order, please, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Yes.

#### Point of Order Distribution of Bills

**Mr. MacDonald:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise under Standing Order 70. I'm interested to get a copy of the three bills that were introduced earlier, in my view quite some time ago, and I have not had an opportunity to get those yet. I was wondering if we could please proceed with the distribution of the bills that were introduced earlier.

Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Yeah. Copies of the bills are coming.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Okay. Thank you. For clarification, Mr. Chairman, could you go through the procedure for us as to when we, particularly the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, should receive those bills after they're introduced?

**The Chair:** Well, we have a copy of the bill distributed as soon as it's available, and the pages are working hard on collating them and so on.

**Mr. MacDonald:** Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that.

### Bill 206

#### Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008

**The Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise today to open Committee of the Whole debate for Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008. I'd like to thank all members who've participated in the discussion up to this point and also like to thank all members of the public who have supported the bill overwhelmingly so far.

Mr. Chairman, I'll begin by addressing a number of sections outlined in the bill based in part on some of the comments and questions that have been referred to by members in prior debate here in the Legislative Assembly.

Bill 206 is a no-nonsense, positive, proactive, preventative, carrot rather than stick, healthy-living incentive bill, which offers a nonrefundable tax credit for children and youth and adults who invest their time and money in eligible organizations and programs which are geared toward ongoing and sustained physical activity. The bill furthers one of the government's most important objectives, to promote healthy living in our province, and at the same time, Mr. Chairman, it will alleviate a great deal of the strain on our ever-ballooning health care budget.

Bill 206 is based on federal and provincial bills from Ottawa and Manitoba, which are very popular but are only for children. It also mirrors Nova Scotia's age-inclusive bill, which takes effect for people of all ages on January 1, 2009. Mr. Chairman, I have to stress this: it will save millions of dollars, not cost millions of dollars.

With respect to specific sections, such as 12.1(1)(b), whether friends and neighbours are going to a health or a yoga club in the city or belong to the curling or softball leagues in the country, they love the bill because it includes other activities as well, to be decided by Health and Finance.

In prior debate with respect to section 12.1(1)(c) the question was raised as to whether those without enough disposable income would not be able to take advantage of this credit because they would not be able to put up the money up front. I'm pleased to report quite the contrary. It's exactly the opposite. When organizations are aware that this credit exists, I would hope it would be common practice that those who can't pay at the beginning will be allowed to pay once they've received the credit, so this credit will be exactly what the less advantaged have been praying for. The benefit of the tax credit is designed to give the less advantaged exactly what they need to bridge the gap, to live their dreams that would have been completely impossible otherwise.



Mr. Chairman, in earlier debate the question as to what activities will be accepted was raised. Now, section 12.1(1)(d) of the legislation defines physical activity as “an activity that contributes to the development of an individual’s cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility or balance.” This is an inclusive bill which at the same time will have well-defined boundaries, to be clarified by the departments of health and finance, which is the usual process for a bill such as this.

Mr. Chairman, there were questions as to what is excluded from the bill. I can confirm that it’s true that work and extreme sports and professional sports and activities that one does not pay to take part in are not included, for very good reasons, as referred to in section 12.1(1)(b).

One member suggested that rural Albertans will somehow lose out on this. I’m pleased to report that nothing could be further from the truth. When I worked on my uncle’s farm, throughout the year we played hockey and curling and football and softball and golf, and the list goes on. We even had relatives who were in hiking and walking groups. This bill would apply to all of those activities. It’s certainly not limited to the cities, Mr. Chairman. In fact, I would hope our rural friends would take advantage of this as much or more than anybody in an urban setting.

Another member asked whether there was a requirement for an activity to be run only by licensed organizations. I believe that it was the Member for Calgary-Varsity. I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that sections 12.1(1)(b), (c), and (d) define eligible organization, eligible physical activity, and physical activity in separate ways, so it’s only logical that we’d have certain requirements, such as a fee, tied to an organization to ensure that we’re being fiscally responsible and that there’s a bona fide financial paper trail with respect to section 12.1(5).

Mr. Chairman, one member suggested that a person could pay for an activity but never take part and would only do so to make use of the credit. I have to say that that’s illogical. It doesn’t make any kind of sense. Many people go to the gym in part because the environment itself is motivating, as is this tax credit. It’s about motivation and incentive, not about monetary reward. Now, a receipt is, obviously, a proof of payment for an activity, and it’s required to receive the credit as per section 12.1(5) of the legislation. I simply ask anyone: why would you do it just for the tax credit when you have to pay money to get the credit? People aren’t making money. We’re crediting a portion of the amount paid. I’m sorry; that argument just doesn’t hold water. They aren’t making money off this. We’re crediting a portion of the amount paid. That’s the bottom line.

Now, I’ve already read section 12.1(1)(d). I won’t read it again. That just reiterates the fact that these are measurable outcomes. If push came to shove, we could have proof required, but we also don’t want to be the fitness police.

3:10

Almost at the end of references to other members’ statements earlier. One member suggested the bill would only be a success if it transformed a child or adult from a couch potato to a healthy individual for the rest of their life. Mr. Chairman, with respect to section 12.1(1)(a) I’ve never suggested that this was any kind of a magic bullet. It’s about incremental improvements and motivating people to be more active and healthy than they were. We can’t predict what anybody is going to do for the rest of their life. If that argument was to hold water, that’s kind of like saying that we shouldn’t fund postsecondary education with loans or bursaries because there’s no guarantee that they’ll put into practice everything they majored in for the rest of their life.

Mr. Chairman, Albertans pride themselves on living in a jurisdiction in which the only way that taxes are going is down. A simple, clear goal of providing an incentive for healthy living through increased physical activity while reducing health costs is what this bill is all about: a no-nonsense, positive, proactive, preventative, carrot rather than stick, healthy-living incentive bill offering a nonrefundable tax credit for those who already spend their own time and money on themselves. It will lower our health care costs.

As such, Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank you, all members of this Assembly, and everyone beyond this Chamber for their support of this initiative. Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for my chance to rise and speak to Bill 206, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008. I want to commend the hon. member for his initiative on improving the health of Albertans, reducing the costs to the health system. One of the primary principles of health today, public health in particular, is to make the healthy choice the easy choice. Obviously, if we’re creating any kind of incentive – access, mobility, reduced cost to get in, and enhancements to people’s well-being – these are all important directions for governments to take. As others have mentioned, having less than a third of Albertans taking regular exercise is a significant threat to health and to the health care system. We have to improve that, and this is clearly an initiative to try to do that.

There are some issues relating to this that perhaps others have discussed but I haven’t heard discussed; that is, fundamentally it would contribute to a very significant drop in the budget for the Alberta government if only a quarter of Albertans took advantage of this. One would hope that we could get that much uptake. If only a quarter of Albertans took advantage of this, it would cost the government over \$125 million per year. Clearly, that has some implications for the budget, but clearly also the reduction in health care costs for improving people’s health would presumably offset that very significantly.

There are other issues, too, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed has indicated, around ensuring that the money was used for that purpose, ensuring that it was a bona fide activity and that people were not using it for darts, pool, racetrack activities, other kinds of things. This is clearly something that all Albertans would want to see as an accountability measure. We can’t simply be giving away \$125 million in this province without having some kind of clear accountability measure.

The initiative does clearly encourage healthier lifestyles, but the other big issue in health today is addressing determinants of health; that is, looking at issues around early childhood development, childhood feeding, supports for single mothers, ensuring people of all backgrounds, including new Canadians, have access to the basic needs of life: a house, a clean environment, a safe environment, a job, income, the social supports they need to be healthy. Those are more fundamental even than getting access to an exercise facility. It’s also fair to say that all of us can get exercise by just stepping out the door.

There could be some serious questions asked about whether this \$125 million couldn’t better be spent on the highest risk population in Alberta: those who are least educated, those who are coming from other countries, those who have never had a pattern of regular exercise, those who have not had an experience with physical activity or trained in the joys of athletics and sports and that sort of thing. This \$125 million could go a long way to addressing the most disadvantaged.

What we are here deciding is that those who can already make connections with a formal sports facility, a formal club, and have the wherewithal to spend in the first instance will get back some of that. Well, clearly, that's not the poor. Clearly, that's not those who are most vulnerable to health problems, both emotional and physical. It's a reservation I have when we jump to the middle class, basically, which is what this is targeted to, those who have the liquid capital to put into a health club. That excludes a tremendous number of people in Alberta. So I do have a bit of a reservation there.

Having said that, there are clearly benefits to those who do participate, and one has to acknowledge that these need to be addressed in as broad and holistic a way as we can. Government is already contributing to social supports, to supports to independent living, to those with disabilities, who also may need extra support to do this kind of thing. One of the big challenges, of course, is transportation for many of these people. I guess it would be important that this tax credit be somehow attached to access to those facilities because the costs of transportation to these facilities would be prohibitive for the very people that we want to see use them. I wonder if the hon. member could comment on whether these resources could be used for transportation to and from these facilities. That would clearly be reducing another barrier to these activities.

So it's an important initiative, one that I with reservations will support. Clearly, it has some of the essential elements of initiating a better, more fit culture. What it lacks, I think, is a focus where the real need is: the most disadvantaged, the most vulnerable, and those who need more than just assistance to buy a membership in a club but those who need access to the club, that need the ability to have the supports around them so that, for example, the single mother has someone to take care of the kids while she's doing the exercise program and so on for the many people that have other responsibilities to cover while they are taking advantage of what is, at base, a very practical and helpful program.

With those comments, Mr. Chairman, I'll take my seat and listen to more of the debate. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Prior to my remarks I would like to move that Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008, be amended as follows. I have the amendments here, if we could get those out.

**The Chair:** It looks like a copy of the amendment has been distributed, so, hon. member, please continue.

3:20

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I just want to briefly explain the changes. They're not large in volume, but they are significant. Basically, the amendment moves that section 2 be amended in the proposed legislation by striking out "\$1500" and substituting "\$500," thereby, of course, decreasing significantly, by a full two-thirds, the possible maximum amount of the tax credit.

The reason for this, Mr. Chair, is basically a recognition of the financial times that we are in right now. I don't think there's a member in this House that doesn't note how serious a world financial situation there is here, and we definitely need to tighten our belts as a province, given the circumstances that have arisen. I believe it is an appropriate amendment, but there are some things that need to be addressed and clarified in this bill going forward for this amendment to make sense.

First of all, I want to speak briefly about who this Bill 206 with

the amendment will target. I agree that it won't reach people who don't pay taxes or pay very little taxes, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View spoke about. But it will affect a wide range of individuals, specifically, Mr. Chair, families who are trying to keep active, who might see in this financial period a decrease in their disposable household incomes. This type of amendment really will help many families to continue putting their children in the sports and in the programs that will help keep them active, which I think is so essential to preventative health. Four mouths to feed is a lot more difficult than one mouth to feed, so the fact that this will no doubt help families disproportionately to potentially other groups and demographics in Alberta I think is not a bad thing. I think it's something that we need to recognize is an issue, that families are going to be asked to cope with some serious financial issues, and this will help them in that regard during this time.

Also, this is a tax cut. This is not a spending program. I think it has been proven by this government as recently as the '90s and into this century, Mr. Chair, that modest tax reductions, as long as they're modest and controlled, actually stimulate growth in the economy. As our economy slows down, I would rather put some extra money in the pockets of families, who are going to make sure that that money is spent more efficiently, I believe, than government ever could, and in turn that will help stimulate the economy going forward. I don't think that this is a measure that in the end will hurt the bottom line, definitely not in the long term.

We're going into a situation where in the last budget we eliminated health care premiums, for example. That's quite a large tax cut. It's a tax cut that's far larger than this. I think that it's the right thing to do. Again, it's going to put money back in the pockets of Albertans, and it's going to allow Albertans to make decisions with their money. I think it's modest enough that it will not affect the ability of this province to deliver the core services that Albertans want and need.

Another reason that I believe Bill 206 is an important bill to pass at this time is that we need to take preventative health care more seriously than we do now. We're spending billions and billions of dollars on our health care system with mixed results. Some things we're doing very well; other things not so well. I think that we need to start looking at many different preventative programs and initiatives to help people and encourage people to live healthier lifestyles. I believe, again, the effect of this tax credit that we're talking about here on the bottom line of this province will actually be a net positive as people stay more active and, therefore, will have less health problems in the system.

I think, also, that we have to start actually speaking with our actions. You hear across the country lots of talk about preventative health care and how important it is to prevent bad habits and encourage young people to live healthier lives, yet there's very little that's actually done. This isn't just this House. It's many governments across the world and definitely this country. This gives Alberta a chance to show how proactive we can be, that we actually are going to do something about this problem – we're not just going to sit back and keep talking about how important it is and do nothing – that is actually going to have an effect. Again, that is another reason to pass this bill.

There are a couple of concerns – and I think they're legitimate concerns – that need to be addressed that I've heard from other members of the House. They are very legitimate concerns. The first is that this is somehow a spending bill. I don't see how this is a spending bill. This is a tax cut. This province does not have a revenue-generating problem. Where we do need to work is on controlling our spending. That is where we need to do better. But a small tax cut, a small amount of money being left in the pockets of

taxpayers is not a spending program. It is clearly not a spending program. It is clearly a program, like I said, that is going to encourage good behaviour and at the end of the day is going to put money back in families' pockets, back in everyone's pockets. It's not just families; individuals can use this program as well. That, I think, is a very important point.

A second point that I've heard a lot about is this argument that in rural Alberta they won't be able to use this program as much as, say, if you lived in a city. I disagree with that completely. I was born and raised in rural Alberta, and I know a little bit about it. I know that there wasn't much else for me to do but sports growing up: hockey, basketball at the school, et cetera. This program, if anything, could at the end of the day disproportionately help rural Albertans compared with city folk. No offence to the city folk here.

Again, this program does not just concentrate on one group. It concentrates not only on families, which I talked about earlier, but it concentrates this tax relief on everybody, no matter where they live, whether they're single, whether they're married, whether they have families, whether they don't have families, young, old. It's all there for everyone to enjoy, and that's what I like about it.

The third and final – and it kind of relates to the first – is that given the financial crisis, we shouldn't decrease our revenues right now. Well, I want to look specifically at the bill. If you look at (2), where I'm proposing the amendment be implemented, 12.1(2) specifically gives a formula. This is very important. It says, "A x (B-\$100)" – that's the formula for determining the tax credit – "where A is the specified percentage for the year." Now, that specified percentage for the year is going to be determined by the minister. Although we're saying \$500 is the limit here – that's the proposed amendment – at the end of the day the minister is going to be able to determine whether or not and to what degree this tax credit goes forward. In other words, if the minister puts zero where A is, then there's going to be no available tax credit. If the budget is such that the minister feels we can give a little more with regard to this tax credit, where we can make that number 20 per cent or 30 per cent or 50 per cent, then the minister can do that, and people can take advantage of the credit accordingly.

Those are my comments, Mr. Chair. I hope everyone will support this bill. Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has put up an amendment here. We'll call it amendment A1. Does any other hon. member wish to speak on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

3:30

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. I'll speak briefly because I want to save the majority of my discussion for the remainder of the Committee of the Whole process. I appreciate what the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere is trying to do. Basically, he's gone through the brainstorming process and has said: well, possibly this bill would be more sellable if the amount was reduced from \$1,500 to \$500.

But the money is only one part of the inadequacies of this particular bill. The idea of promoting physical activity is a wonderful intent, but the way it's being accomplished doesn't necessarily work. The potential of \$1,500 to \$500, I was following the logic there, but where I got lost was when it was suggested that, well, regardless of whatever we suggest would be the amount, the minister in his or her wisdom through regulation as opposed to open discussion and debate – in other words, taking place in this Legislature – can omnipotently decide what the percentage is. I don't believe that that is the way to go.

I do appreciate the brainstorming activity. That's why the

government introduced the idea of nonpartisan standing policy committees: so that individuals such as the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere would have a number of qualified elected representatives sitting around a table coming up with similarly good intentions and amendments that would see the intent of Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008, answer more of the questions that I appreciate the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed attempted to provide.

Another suggestion that I would make that sort of follows along the same line of the amendment in the original bill is the idea similar to the education rebate, where you get a rebate based on your tuition costs for your course registration. For example, for a family of three – they've got one son playing soccer, a daughter playing rugby, and another son potentially playing broomball – whatever the activity is, the cost of the community registration for that particular activity could then be addressed. What it would do is approach more children who were trying to attach to physical activity and its importance early on. While this amendment reduces from \$125 million to approximately \$42 million the amount that the government might shell out in terms of promoting physical activity, as the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere indicated, regardless of what that amount is, the minister can simply decide not to have any percentage applied in the form of a rebate, whether it be \$1,500 or \$500.

I don't believe the amendment addresses the overall concerns of incenting the widest number of Albertans to get physically involved and, as a result, cut down on our health costs, so I would have trouble supporting the amendment in its current form for the same reasons that I have trouble supporting the bill. I think both require more work. It's an honest attempt, and I appreciate the honesty and the effort that went into suggesting this amendment, but it doesn't deal with the wider concern, and that is incenting 3.2 million Albertans – or is it now 3.5 million? – to adopt more healthy lifestyles.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. member who wishes to speak on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think I would have to rise in support of the amendment. I think it brings us to recognize that not only is this a dangerous economic time in Alberta; it's also an opportunity to put in context the benefits. Most of this funding will go to middle-class people who are already able to join some of these sports clubs and fitness centres. This would leave significantly more funding for government to do what I think is the higher priority, which is to target, if we really want to target funding for fitness, those who can most benefit from it. So I would support the amendment.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. member on amendment A1?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

**The Chair:** Now the committee will continue on the bill as amended. The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Xiao:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join the Committee of the Whole in discussing Bill 206, the Alberta Personal

Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008. The goal of Bill 206 is to motivate Albertans to become more physically active by offering a tax credit for expenses incurred to participate in organized physical activity.

I would like to discuss section 12.1(1)(b) of the proposed bill, which defines an eligible organization under this act to be “an organization approved by the Provincial Minister that provides programs of physical activity to individuals or groups.” I’m curious about what exactly section 12.1(1)(b) includes. It is not clear to me whether it includes organizations that co-ordinate sports leagues. These organizations are responsible for a countless number of children and adults alike engaging in all kinds of physical activities. Organized hockey, for example, requires a tremendous amount of co-ordination, working around arena schedules and liaising with other leagues or districts to set times for games. Because of all this administrative work registering in hockey leagues comes with a fee. I am uncertain from reading Bill 206 whether this cost would qualify. On occasion there is a team registration fee as opposed to an individual participant fee, and I’m uncertain whether this would be eligible for the tax credit.

Many individuals choose to join their community league, which allows them to participate in several community events and receive discounts or free admission to certain facilities. These community leagues come with a cost. For example, the Evansdale community league here in Edmonton costs \$25 per family, but if your child wants to register in an organized sport that the community league is organizing, it might cost an additional \$125. I’m unsure if under Bill 206 a credit for the community league fee as well as the supplementary fee required to participate in the organized sport are both eligible.

**3:40**

Mr. Chairman, I’m curious, too, about whether the cost of the equipment is covered. Sometimes this cost is equally as much of a deterrent as the activity fee. If these costs are not covered, this bill could become ineffective for those Albertans who are in the position of being unable to afford the equipment. If so, I wonder if some clarity is needed in Bill 206 about whether the cost of the sporting equipment required to play the organized sport is covered. If not, these individuals may consider renting equipment instead.

Many people may rent equipment, like skates, if they, for example, visit Hawrelak park in the winter and don’t own a pair, or if they go to the mountains to go skiing, they may rent skis. I’m uncertain as to whether Bill 206 provides a tax credit to individuals who rent sporting equipment?

When teams register in a tournament, there’s another fee. I’m unsure whether it can be a credit.

I think that establishing clarity in these areas of the bill is important, Mr. Chairman, because I believe that these details will affect Albertans’ decisions. Individuals may want to bypass the formal organization of a sport and simply rent an arena to play a game of shinny. I’m not sure if under Bill 206 the rental cost is eligible for a tax credit.

The Edmonton Sport and Social Club organizes several sporting leagues for adults. Traditional sports such as soccer, baseball, hockey, volleyball, and basketball are offered through the club, but on top of this they offer less traditional or newly invented sports such as boot camp, ultimate Frisbee, and dodge ball. In fact, I know of a dodge ball team that is composed of members who work in this building, and I wonder if these nontraditional organized sports are covered under this bill. I’m wondering how official or recognized an activity needs to be to qualify for the tax credit.

In 2005 Edmonton hosted the World Masters Games. This event

is the largest multisports event in the world, providing opportunities for adults at all kinds of levels to remain or become competitive in their sport. In 2005 the games drew more than 16,000 athletes and featured 27 sports. The next games are to be held in 2007 in Sydney, Australia. Organizers anticipate hosting approximately 30,000 participants ranging in age from their 30s to well into their 90s. Mr. Chairman, these individuals pay a registration fee of approximately \$175. I’m not sure if this registration fee is an eligible cost under Bill 206. While many events at these games are traditional sports, such as baseball, basketball, ice hockey, rugby, and volleyball, some are less conventional, such as canoeing and kayaking, archery, and weightlifting. I wonder if individuals that are participating in archery will be able to receive a credit for their registration fee. These games offer no money or prizes; instead, they encourage participants to consider their experience the reward.

More and more people are taking physical activity and health very seriously, but not all people enjoy getting this physical activity in the same way. Not everyone finds enjoyment and exhilaration in going to the gym. While some of us go to great lengths to fit in a workout, go for a run, or climb Mount Everest, like the Member for Calgary-Lougheed, others find more satisfaction in playing hockey with a bunch of friends. To these people organized sports are the best forum for being physically active. They feel like it’s more than just a workout. It’s being social. It’s having fun.

Mr. Chairman, to them, knowing exactly what kind of organization qualifies as an eligible organization is very important. Knowing which expenses they can credit may affect what sports they choose to participate in. Ultimately, physical activity has benefits regardless of how it is achieved. Clarity regarding what qualifies as organized sports and the programs of physical activity would be welcomed.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Notley:** Thank you. It’s a pleasure to be able to rise to speak to this bill. Like many people who have already spoken, there’s no question that the objectives of the bill are tremendously laudable and worthy of careful consideration. There is no question out there, I think, that physical activity is directly related to tremendously positive outcomes, both individually and collectively. In terms of what it does for our overall health, for our mental health, for our productivity, and how that subsequently is applied collectively to the community, the same kind of thing. The more people walk, the more they exercise, the more they engage in different types of activity, the better it is for the community as a whole. There’s no question that the more we can promote any kind of physical activity that gets at the kind of objectives defined in the bill – and that’s in particular, you know, activities that contribute to enhancing cardiorespiratory endurance, muscular strength and endurance, and flexibility or balance, all those things – that’s all good.

However – you have to expect that there’s a “however” – there are some concerns as well, many of which have already been raised with respect to the mechanism that this bill reflects for achieving these objectives and whether or not this is really the best way to go about achieving the objectives that this bill is attempting to achieve. From a practical point of view – I mean, I speak just from my own experience – I’m kind of a fan of physical activity, and at least before I got this job, I engaged in it quite regularly. Now it’s a little bit less regularly. Nonetheless, my sort of preferred method of exercise is running, so of course the first thing I thought of when I saw this was: well, are my running shoes, that I have to replace every six months, going to be covered? They should be, right? You

know, if I don't replace them, then ultimately I get injured, and all those negative things arise.

It, of course, begs the question more broadly. It's not just about my running shoes; really, it's not. It's about what things are covered and what are not covered that achieve this objective. Is there a rational distinction within the bill as it's currently proposed between what is covered and what isn't covered? Some of those points have been raised already. There are questions about sports equipment. Maybe you're involved in something that doesn't require a membership fee, but it does require rental or purchase of equipment. Maybe – someone else raised this point, and it's an excellent point – you require child care in order to be able to engage in physical activity. Personally, when I started running, I started running at 6 a.m. because I had an hour window of child care before my husband went off to work. Well, maybe in order for people to engage in physical activity, what they actually need is someone to come in and watch their kids for an hour so they can do that. You know, that's the way to ensure that that kind of thing happens.

3:50

Another one that struck me as probably even better than any of those suggestions was the idea of actually giving a tax credit for buying a bus pass so that instead of driving inside the city, we take the bus. Of course, that invariably involves, you know, depending on where you're going, several blocks of walking, which, if you do it every morning and every evening, is probably the best physical activity program that any of us could get involved with. Why is that not included? Not to mention, of course, all the good things that come from supporting your public transit system and reducing the number of cars on the road and the amount of exhaust going into the air.

There are a lot of different ways in which these objectives can be achieved that aren't at this point covered by this bill, so I'm concerned about that. All those things aside, though, what really concerns me most about this bill, which has been identified by a few people and which is not as much of a problem now that we've gone from the \$1,500 to the \$500 but continues still to be a problem, is that this is absolutely a tax giveaway to a certain section of our population, and that section is not the section of the population that needs it most. It is not just a flat tax reduction; it's actually a regressive tax reduction. People who really need this to be able to engage in these kinds of activities can't afford to wait a year for a tax credit, or alternatively they don't earn enough to get a tax credit.

I know of a person in my community who very much wanted to put her son into Cubs but couldn't do it because the \$170 entrance fee was just too much. It was just too much. She doesn't pay enough money to get anything back through this process – nothing – because she doesn't pay enough taxes, so this would not benefit her at all. In their particular case, they live in a walk-up apartment, and probably more than many of the kids that this would benefit, those kids need to get outside, get to a playground, get out of the 600-square-foot apartment that they're living in. They need that. They're not going to get it through this.

You know, I could be talked into supporting this if there was a matching \$50 million given to low-income people and low-income families who do not qualify through a tax-credit program to promote physical activity. We were talking \$150 million. Now we're down to \$50 million. Well, let's talk about splitting it half and half or whatever you want to do. But at the end of the day the people that really need this tax credit, whose behaviour is changed by whether these fees are covered by government or not, are the very people who won't get the benefit of this tax credit because they in most cases don't pay enough taxes for it to be of value to them. That

really is my primary concern, that this just isn't getting at the right people.

Experts in taxation law and taxation policy as well have repeatedly said – and indeed I'm sure I've heard people from the other side of the House here on different occasions actually support this theory – that tax policy is not really the way you change people's behaviour or bring about certain policy objectives. Tax policy is to raise money, and it's linked to the economy, but after that, taxes really aren't supposed to be the way you change the way people act within a society. It's just not the most efficient way to do it.

I'd be very curious to see the studies that show that for someone who got a \$500 tax credit potentially eight months after the enrolment, those particular people had their behaviour changed and that more of them actually took up a behaviour because eight months down the road they'd get \$500 back. I'm not convinced that there is a tremendous amount of research in terms of the cause and effect there as far as actually bringing about the increase in physical activity that you're looking for. I think the better way to bring about increased physical activity is to provide certain services for free and to invite people in right there, right then. That's going to make it happen.

There was suggestion that in some cases some places would just waive the fee until the person got their tax credit a year later. Well, frankly, I'm not even sure if you can get your tax credit if you haven't already got the receipt, which you can't really get if you haven't paid it, so I actually don't think that would work. Certainly, I know we're part of the much-maligned local ski club, and it's about \$500 for our family to join. I'm pretty sure that if I would have asked them if I could ski for a year and then pay them at the end of the year, they would not have run with that one. I'm pretty sure I would not have gotten the A-okay, the thumbs-up on that one. Again, we had to put that money out, which we happily did.

But the point is that I think the people who need that \$500 or \$2,000 or however much it is, depending on how many kids they have in their family, won't make a different choice because they have the possibility of getting some of that money eight or 10 months down the road. Ultimately what this ends up being is more of a subsidy to, you know, certain parts of the fitness industry, and as much as I think gyms are a great thing, I don't think we need to be spending that much money on that particular objective. I would much prefer to see this bill, though, because I do want to see us preserve the good intent, which is clearly embodied within the bill . . . [Ms Notley's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity, followed by the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you very much. So many questions, so little time to answer or amend this bill suggests ongoing problems. Bill 206 as amended has gone from \$1,500 to \$500. This process reminds me of the commercials about if life were really like that, where a piece of art is bid down rather than up. Then the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere confirmed my concerns by saying: well, it could actually go down to zero depending on whatever the minister in charge of this rebate decides is the acceptable percentage. There's that same air of unreality associated with this piece of legislation and the accountability to Alberta taxpayers associated with the bill. The fact that the minister can override the legislation concerns me. Then we have what I believe is missing, and that's the balances. The check has gone from \$1,500. It's now down to \$500 and heading south. But we don't have the balances.

Now, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, who proposed this

bill, indicated in his explanation of questions that had arisen in second reading: why would anybody go out and buy a gym membership if they didn't intend to actually work out? Well, just think of all those wonderful pieces of fitness equipment that were given to you at Christmas and for how long you used them and to what extent they were ever taken out of the closet again after that initial flurry of activity. The idea that just because you purchase something, whether it's a fitness membership, whether it's the chrome weights kind of thing that have that wonderful rack and so on, or whether, like myself, you fill your basement with pieces of equipment because you'd rather pay for the equipment than pay for the gym membership – you feel that you're being able to leverage better participation. Then you become an MLA, and your life is no longer your own in terms of finding those fitness opportunities.

While the member thinks that people wouldn't spend this money without taking advantage of it, there is no balance to say that once they've bought this gym membership, they actually participated. One of the requirements to get that balance part of the check and balance would be some type of attendance record that you actually showed up on the doorstep of this fitness place. This reminds me of Shakespeare and *Henry IV* and characters like Falstaff and Bardolph, who were discussing the idea that if you were sufficiently wealthy, you could buy your way out of the army and you could get some poor lower-class, cannon-fodder, serf-type individual to serve in your place. I see the situation where the individual has his chauffeur get on the treadmill for him and: I've done 300 laps for you; do you feel better, sir?

4:00

We've had questions asked about what would qualify. Well, those of us who have watched *The Sopranos* have seen these velour sweatsuits on these, you know, very obese individuals. Their idea of a workout is punching somebody out or collecting off a construction site kind of thing. Do velour outfits qualify for a tax rebate? Or do some of the more attractive outfits like the one I sported this morning running along the river valley that my wife purchased for me from the Running Room? She felt that my thrift store fashions were not necessarily suitable for running along the river valley. Therefore, the fluorescent outfit that she purchased on my behalf I would probably get to claim under the \$500 fitness rebate that we as MLAs receive. I guess the \$1,500 to the \$500 brings it more in line with what we receive.

Interestingly enough, in terms of our fitness and well-being we can apply that same \$500 to computer programs. Now, whether it's computer programs for research or computer programs for simulated exercise, we're not questioned to a great extent; we just have to supply the bill.

As to the Member for Calgary-Lougheed's assertion that was brought up again by the MLA from Strathcona, the idea of the poor being able to play now, pay later: I've yet to see any kind of a situation where you get to have that enjoyment and then lay out your tax rebate sometime later.

I know that a number of the furniture stores have interesting situations where, you know, you enjoy now, pay later, but the payment is expected, and it doesn't come in the form of an income tax rebate that you simply sign over to The Brick or other department store.

Also, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona pointed out how the money could potentially be better spent. I'd like to add to that discussion. There are so many individuals who are in a poverty circumstance who, due to poor nutrition and the inability to purchase proper foods, can't possibly perform the type of physical exercise necessary to regulate conditions that they're so susceptible to.

Diabetes, which is one of the diseases that results from both poor nutrition and also a pre-inclination towards obesity, can't necessarily be directed or defeated by this bill because so many of the people who are in the high-risk category are, unfortunately, in the poverty category too. There are a number of individuals – in particular, minority groups such as First Nations, based on the water quality on their reserves and the lack of support – that are highly susceptible to diseases like diabetes. A large portion of that population are not going to be able to benefit from what was once \$1,500 and is now down to \$500 and may, as I say, with ministerial oversight get down to zero.

The money, I believe, could much better be spent on organizations such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, community youth initiatives. We would know there would be a result because with the registration and with the involvement would come the activity. There is no doubt that we want to engage children and youth, and one of the best ways to do that is at the school level or at the community level. So if we were to reduce the cost of attending sports facilities – swimming pools, skating rinks, and so on – and if we targeted the specific group of individuals who fall in that poverty area, the 64,000 children living below the poverty line, then we would have an opportunity to incent them to go to their local area and to participate and enjoy life.

I was lucky growing up that I was highly involved in sports. They were mostly of a pickup nature. Sometimes you had a glove. Sometimes it was just, you know, either a cricket bat or a regular bat and the old-style red, white, and blue rubber balls that you could seem to smack well across the field. But there was no real money associated with the game. It was just a group of kids having that opportunity to come together and enjoy each other's company and participate in sports.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, followed by the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure today to rise and join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008, as brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I'd like to start today by highlighting the significance of section 12.1(1)(c) within Bill 206. I appreciate the points made by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed today regarding that section, but I'd like to take a different tack here. In my mind this section was designed to help clarify the requirements needed to apply for a personal income tax credit offered through this legislation.

Specifically, section 12.1(1)(c) defines an eligible physical activity as "a physical activity that does not provide an individual participant with remuneration." In essence, this section attempts to include only physical activity that does not offer monetary compensation, normally job-related, but is instead more recreational in nature. Mr. Chairman, my concern centres on the realization that physical activity experienced in a workplace might prove a valid way of encouraging a healthy lifestyle. There are many occupations that require a significant degree of physical effort and exertion or even a sustained level of exertion. Others may demand short bursts of high-energy activity.

Farming and ranching, for example, are highly physical activities and are a fundamental part of Alberta's economy, culture, and provincial identity. Operating a farm or ranch requires long days and often intense physical labour. For farmers it's particularly intense during the spring and in the early fall. Probably the lack of adequate sleep is the one drawback to this increased physical

activity. For ranchers it is physical activity all year-round, with an emphasis on increased intensity during the late fall, winter, and spring for feeding and for calving.

Additional care must also be paid to farm and ranch upkeep and maintenance, which also requires demanding physical labour. Operating and fixing machinery may only require a moderate amount of energy, but that activity can be prolonged, requiring stamina and fitness. It is usually an all-day activity that is incredibly physically demanding. Clearly, physical exertion is a necessary reality in the life of a farmer and rancher. These physical jobs need to be performed because they are essential to maintaining the quality of product that a farmer sells to make a living. Mr. Chairman, I've used this example because it is fundamentally what section 12.1(1)(c) addresses. Farmers and ranchers ensure their livelihoods through physical activity. Every action, from tending livestock, fencing, and fixing machinery: all require physical exertion, and all contribute in some way to financial gain.

#### 4:10

The objective of Bill 206 is to encourage the development of a healthy lifestyle through encouraging physical activity. This is why the wording of section 12.1(1)(c), specifically the term "remuneration," is so important. Not only would it exclude those whose occupations require physical activity, but in cases such as farming and ranching, where remuneration is somewhat indirect, it may be even less clear in terms of how it relates to this legislation. The daily labour activities of the farmers and ranchers are not directly paid for as may be the case for a construction worker or a day labourer. Rather, this lifestyle labour goes towards increasing the value and the quantity of their product. These products, whether they be grain or livestock, are then sold and in turn translate into financial gain.

It is in this way, Mr. Chairman, that I am concerned about the usage of the word "remuneration" in section 12.1(1)(c). Exempting Albertans from the benefit of a tax credit because of remuneration, be it direct or indirect, may not be in the best interest of this legislation. Rather, the wording of section 12.1(1)(c) should be constructed in such a way that better recognizes the importance and diversity of physical activity however it occurs. Indeed, if the underlying goal of Bill 206 is to provide an incentive for those who engage in physical activity, then it's in the best interest of this bill to recognize the varying forms of physical activity and their contribution to health and wellness.

Occupation, as we can see, may be one of the underlying factors that helps promote healthy lifestyle choices. It is critical that we recognize that physical activity and personal wellness can come from one's job. Mr. Chairman, I'd also like to draw a comparison to such occupations as hunting and fishing guides and outfitters and, actually, anyone who derives their income from outdoor activity. If it is the goal of Bill 206 to recognize and reward individuals who take control of their personal health and wellness, then Bill 206 would have more far-reaching success if it was crafted in a manner that reflected that healthy lifestyle choices can be made in a number of ways, including occupation as defined by section 12.1(1)(c).

Currently the wording presented in this section does not effectively address this reality. With this in mind, the wording of this section needs to confirm that occupational physical activity is beneficial to health and wellness. Ensuring that the wording and the interpretation of this section acknowledges this is paramount for guaranteeing that the goals of this legislation are accurately met.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me to rise and speak on this important section.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

**Ms Redford:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join the Committee of the Whole debate on Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008, brought forth by my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. Mr. Chairman, I would like to begin by mentioning the importance of section 12.1(1)(d) of Bill 206. This section defines physical activity as "an activity that contributes to the development of an individual's cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility or balance." I must tell you that as a mother of a six-year-old I think those are very high ideals and are very important in terms of how we raise our children. It is important to discuss the specific details of this section so that we clearly understand what we're talking about.

Mr. Chairman, this section lays out the type of exertion that is required for an activity to be considered a physical activity in order to qualify for the tax credit. However, the definition describes physical activity and the type of exertion that is required; it does not specify the amount of exertion that is necessary for an activity to qualify under this bill. The definition of physical activity provided is very broad and covers a wide range, of which I am very supportive. Referencing this definition is important in order to clarify what will constitute physical activity.

This bill is well intended in that it encourages Albertans to participate in more physical activity and to live better lives. The definition needs to match that intent in order for the bill's goal to be achieved. Physical activity is about getting the body moving, and the definition needs to clarify this. In order to avoid confusion around section 12.1(1)(d), this bill must indicate which activities are and which are not considered physical activities. This definition requires some clarification, and I'd look forward to further comments on this. Albertans should know what constitutes physical activity under the bill so that if they choose an activity based on the tax credit, they will not be told at a later time that their chosen activity is ineligible.

The terms "cardio-respiratory endurance," "muscular strength," and "muscular endurance" used in the definition involve working and moving the body. Many activities develop these physical characteristics. Developing a person's cardiorespiratory endurance provides many short- and long-term health benefits. Lifting weights or just playing sports will develop muscular strength and muscular endurance. Mr. Chairman, the phrase "flexibility or balance" is also included in the definition of physical activity. This phrase is vague, but I think it's very important. I want to ensure that physical activities that develop a person's flexibility or balance or also develop a person's muscular strength or muscular endurance are contemplated by this legislation.

Stretching develops an individual's flexibility and balance. Would stretching be considered physical activity under this bill? I don't know, Mr. Chairman, if tai chi would be included. Are flexibility or balance the appropriate terms to be used in this definition? Perhaps they do not describe the required exertion that was originally intended in Bill 206. Because Bill 206 states "flexibility or balance," a person might believe these activities involve enough exertion to qualify for a tax credit under the bill. Stretching could meet the exertion requirements that are set out under the definition of physical activity. While stretching and flexibility are important, especially when you get older, do they capture the original intent of Bill 206? I would submit that they should. Are these the types of activities the bill is trying to encourage Albertans to participate in? I hope that is the case.

The activities that seniors often participate in to develop their flexibility also develop their muscular strength. Water aerobics is a good example of this. But do activities that only develop flexibility or balance provide the health benefits that this bill is looking for? I think that point needs to be clarified, Mr. Chairman.

I would also like to discuss the word "balance," used in section 12.1(1)(d). I am unaware of any physical activity that only develops an individual's balance. Core strength, I think, is key to developing balance, and it's becoming a more important part of how we physically train in this day and age.

The definition of physical activity as it stands suggests that we give Albertans a tax credit for developing their balance. I think that if we explore the way that we train in the present day, that will clarify this to some point, and indeed clarification may be required. Many physical activities develop an individual's flexibility or balance, but they also develop a person's muscular strength or endurance. They do not solely develop a person's balance or flexibility. Surely yoga, which contributes to the development of an individual's balance and flexibility, will qualify under this bill.

I think the definition of physical activity in section 12.1(1)(d) is not defined enough. Activities that solely develop an individual's flexibility or balance do not demand a great amount of exertion but clearly do matter. Mr. Chairman, if we do not clarify how much exertion is required to qualify as a physical activity, then Albertans might mistakenly try to utilize this tax credit and risk being rejected because their program does not qualify. This can be disappointing for an individual, but imagine if this involved a family with four children. We do not want some activities to be misinterpreted as physically exertive when they are not.

Mr. Chairman, I would like these specifics to be clarified. I know that when we talk about this, we're speaking about organized sport. I appreciate that, and I think that might go some way to helping us define physical activity. Some further clarification and discussion is required for this section. Defining which activities meet the physical exertion requirement is necessary if Albertans are to understand and benefit from the tax credit. However, overall, particularly with the amendment that has been introduced by my hon. friend, I must say that the intent of this bill and the spirit of this bill are very important to the future health of Albertans. I'm very pleased to see it before the House today, and I look forward to ongoing debate.

Thank you.

4:20

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill, followed by the hon. Member for Strathcona.

**Dr. Brown:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to respond to some of the arguments that have been made on this bill. I know that, like all hon. members, including the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, we all like a tax cut, but a tax cut is the flip side of an increase in spending. I think the test for this bill is whether or not it achieves the best return for the dollar. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View had mentioned the cost, that if a third of Albertans participated in this program, it would cost the treasury some 125 million dollars. Even with the passage of the amendment, which reduced the amount of the tax credit, it still could be a very large sum.

Now, in present economic circumstances, with lower commodity prices across the board, the province of Alberta is going to be experiencing a decrease in resource royalties. A decrease in other commodities across the board, in things like the forestry and agricultural sectors, will be producing less tax revenue for the

province of Alberta, and very likely in some degree corporate and individual tax revenues also can be expected to decline somewhat with the economic circumstances that we have right now.

Now, I will admit that this program probably will induce some people to take up a healthier lifestyle. I don't think there's any question about that. A question is whether or not it will have the long-term benefit that is proposed. The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity mentioned incidents where there's a great rush of people to join health clubs after New Year's. However, the participation in those clubs, I think, rapidly declines in the month of February. I wonder whether or not this is going to motivate people to change their lifestyle and whether or not it is an efficient way to achieve the desired end that we want.

A number of points I'd like to make. First of all, exercise is only one aspect of a healthy lifestyle. Things like smoking, excessive drinking, drugs, and eating habits especially are also part of this equation which leads to healthy living. In fact, I've often wondered when we had a health care premium, which is now being eliminated, why we didn't discriminate on the basis of smoking, for example, why we didn't have it. Private insurers certainly do that. If one purchases life insurance from a private insurance company, one certainly pays an increased premium if one smokes. So it's only one aspect of healthy living.

A number of other things have concerned me about the bill. A second point that I would like to make is that we will be rewarding people who are already engaged in lifestyle programs. People who are involved in organized sports do so not only because of the fitness aspect but because it's an enjoyable thing. By rewarding those folks that are already doing the right thing, we are in effect not achieving any net benefit for what is a loss to the treasury.

The third point I would like to make is that individuals who may maintain a healthy lifestyle or a fitness program or some sort of an activity or active lifestyle would not benefit by the definitions under this bill. There are lots of folks that go out and walk regularly, get regular exercise. There are lots of folks who bicycle to work. There are folks, like the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat mentioned, who maintain a very healthy lifestyle through active physical labour, and those folks are not going to be participating in this program.

The question I have is: what is the empirical evidence that we have before us for any other jurisdiction in the world that has given such a tax credit, and what have the net benefits been? I'd be interested if there was some empirical evidence. I certainly could be persuaded, as I have indicated, that this may be a very inefficient way to achieve a desired end.

In summary, Mr. Chairman, my concerns with this particular bill are the cost to the treasury, whether it is justified by the likely results and the likely benefits to the system.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Quest:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to join Committee of the Whole in discussion on Bill 206, Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008, and to speak in support of this bill one more time. What this bill does is it incentivizes wellness when we still put so much emphasis on treating the sick. It was a great start with the federal program with the kids. I've got an 11-year-old son. I know lots of my friends have young families, and they love the federal program that helps them get their kids into various sports.

It does need to be broad. As the Member for Calgary-Lougheed pointed out, it does benefit urban, it does benefit rural with the



inclusion of curling clubs and ball clubs and so on, so it does have benefits province-wide.

It has been mentioned that many Albertans, especially rural Albertans, are involved in very physically active jobs, so in their case – right – they don't necessarily need to be going to a gym or undertaking other outside physical activity. The benefit for them is that through the Albertans that are able to take advantage of it and do so, it ends up in reduced stress on our health care system, reduced waiting times. So when Albertans that have very physical jobs at some point in their lives need access to the system, they've got easier access to the system because it's not being overburdened by other Albertans.

When we say, you know, that people buy memberships but won't use them, I think we're underestimating Albertans. Albertans are very energetic, ambitious, committed people, and I think that many will take full advantage of this program.

**An Hon. Member:** They're already doing it.

**Mr. Quest:** Some.

I know from personal experience, as I mentioned the other day, that it all starts somewhere. A few years ago I started running a kilometre, two kilometres, three kilometres. Now I've done a couple of half marathons. Now, as mentioned by the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, I don't know if I'll be able to do that again. As was mentioned by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, in our now changing economic times I think many Albertan families may actually benefit from this now more than ever.

I know there's been mention of information campaigns, and yes, there are plenty of campaigns. There have been campaigns for decades telling us about the importance of fitness. I think back to the Participation program and so on. This is all really good except that when we're watching this commercial, we're probably sitting on our couch drinking a beer. We need to actually have something solid, I think, to incentivize us to actually get out and get started because a body in motion stays in motion.

We'll have a healthy, more productive workforce, which in itself creates more wealth. We'll have fewer sick days. We'll have fewer on-the-job injuries. So this will contribute to our prosperity here in Alberta.

We need to deliver a simple message. I know this is not a perfect bill, but we need to deliver a simple message that we are serious about wellness. This is not an expenditure. It is an investment in Albertans' wellness, and I encourage everyone to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4:30

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

**Mr. Webber:** Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to rise today to join the debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008, brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed. Much like the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, who focused mainly on section 12.1(1)(c), I specifically would like to examine section 12.1(1)(b) and explore how this section might require additional clarification. The section I refer to defines the term "eligible organization." It describes an eligible organization as "an organization approved by the Provincial Minister that provides programs of physical activity to individuals or groups." I do not believe that this language provides clarity as to which organizations would be deemed eligible under Bill 206.

As many people are aware, Mr. Chairman, strength, endurance, and flexibility are the core pillars of fitness. Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living recommends not only to work toward a goal of 30 to 60 minutes of activity each day but also to choose a variety of activities from each of these activity groups. Bill 206 aligns with the guide by defining physical activity as "an activity that contributes to the development of an individual's cardio-respiratory endurance, muscular strength, muscular endurance, flexibility or balance."

Now, Mr. Chairman, gyms today are most certainly a venue for an individual to engage in physical activity, as we all know. They are filled with a wide variety of machines and equipment for an individual to use to enhance or maintain their physical fitness. Treadmills, stationary bikes, cross-trainers, rowing machines, and stairclimbers, for example, can be used to help develop an individual's cardiorespiratory endurance. Weight machines and free weights can assist in increasing an individual's muscular strength and endurance, and equipment such as fitness mats and bars provides a means for an individual to develop their flexibility while balance trainers and stability balls assist with the development of core strength and balance.

Most if not all of this equipment is available in gyms, and I believe it is clear that most gyms are well equipped to assist individuals to meet their physical activity targets. Under section 12.1(1)(b) of Bill 206 I think it is likely they would meet the criteria as eligible organizations that provide programs of physical activity to individuals or groups.

We must also not forget the activities that many fitness facilities and clubs offer for group fitness. As I mentioned previously, Mr. Chair, section 12.1(1)(b) defines an eligible organization as "an organization approved by the Provincial Minister that provides programs of physical activity to individuals or groups." Many gyms also contain group exercise studios, for instance, which house a variety of group fitness classes. Spinning, kick-boxing, boot camp, Pilates, and yoga classes are some of the examples of group fitness classes offered in these facilities. As each of these classes addresses a core element of fitness, I believe the activities performed in these classes at gyms meet the measures for physical activity as detailed in Bill 206.

Mr. Chairman, there are also a variety of other facilities and clubs that provide a means for individuals to engage in physical activity on their own or often in groups. Clubs for rowing and rock climbing, for instance, exist in this province and have fees associated with their memberships and/or participation. The Edmonton Rowing Club is an example that aims to stimulate, to advocate, and to develop the sport of rowing in the greater Edmonton area. Memberships for this club reach up to nearly \$400 a year, which does not include the required bingo and the volunteer hours that members must fulfill as part of their registration. Annual memberships entitle their holders to full access of the club's facilities, including the boats, the indoor rowing tank, the shower room, the change room, and coaching. I believe that anyone who has ever engaged in the activity of rowing would attest that it is one of the best full-body workouts available. Therefore, I question if a club that provides a means for an individual to participate in the activity of rowing would qualify as an eligible organization within the scope of section 12.1(1)(b) of Bill 206.

Organizations that support rock climbing are another example, Mr. Chair, that I feel require clarification under this section. Annual individual memberships for the indoor facilities at the Calgary Climbing Centre, for example, range from about \$449 to \$570 depending on the number of locations and whatever options the individual chooses at these facilities. These fees include the use of

not only the climbing walls but also the use of the universal gym, the free weights, the stationary bikes, the floor mats, the warm-up and cool-down exercises, as well as change room facilities with lockers and showers.

I'm sure that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed would agree that rock climbing is an incredibly demanding physical activity, one that challenges the climber's strength, endurance, agility, and balance. Would you not agree, hon. member?

**Mr. Rodney:** Maybe just a little.

**Mr. Webber:** Have you not climbed a few rocks in your day? I think you have, so you would know this.

I am uncertain, however, if section 12.1(1)(b) of Bill 206 would recognize an organization such as the Calgary Climbing Centre as eligible under this legislation.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I am not taking issue with the merits of Bill 206; rather, I feel certain aspects of its language must be clarified, specifically section 12.1(1)(b), which provides the definition for an eligible organization as "an organization approved by the Provincial Minister that provides programs of physical activity to individuals or groups." There are many physical activities that individuals can engage in either on their own or in groups which have fees associated with them. I believe this Assembly requires clarification as to which organizations would be considered eligible to provide these activities under this bill.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I conclude my comments on the debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 206. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Benito:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It is my sincere pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008, in Committee of the Whole. I welcome the opportunity to speak once again to a bill that I believe will provide a great deal of benefit to Albertans, allowing them greater opportunities to access physical activity for themselves and their children.

That said, Mr. Chairman, I would like to address the importance of section 12.1(1)(b) within Bill 206. This section attempts to identify organizations that would be eligible under the proposed bill for the physical activity credit for Albertans. As per this section an eligible organization means "an organization approved by the Provincial Minister that provides programs of physical activity to individuals or groups." I would suggest that it may be helpful to clarify a little more deeply as to which types of organizations would be considered eligible under this section since there are a number of organizations in Alberta committed to providing a variety of physical activities for all ages.

4:40

Mr. Chairman, I think it is safe to say that healthy living habits like physical activity are more likely to be adopted when we are young. Children often look to their parents, siblings, friends, and the community for appropriate physical activities to engage in. We may conclude the likelihood of a child being physically active by looking at the level of physical activities of those around them, primarily their parents. Thankfully, many organizations within our communities are committed to providing programs specifically designed for children. It is through these community organizations that many learn the healthy habits that this bill intends to instill and reinforce.

However, under section 12.1(1)(b) it is perhaps a little unclear if

many of these organizations will be considered eligible. The YMCA is a perfect example of a community organization that provides a variety of physical activities and programs for children and adults to participate in. The program selection at the YMCA is significant and includes activities for all ages, from fitness classes to after school programs. The YMCA also offers a variety of other programs that include but are not limited to badminton, day camps, aerobics, tae kwon do, and fitness boot camp. With the variety of programs offered, some are more physically demanding than others. It raises the question of whether or not this type of organization would be considered an eligible organization as per section 12.1(1)(b).

Mr. Chairman, another example where we may need more clarification is the widely popular 4-H clubs of Alberta. Since 1917 4-H has been very active in many communities in Alberta. They state their philosophy as follows: "4-H is young people and adults learning project and life skills, co-operating and having fun together, sharing leadership and learning to do by doing." There are a number of programs within 4-H that can be considered both physical and nonphysical.

While some of the programs they offer do not have a physical activity component, many others do. For example, 4-H promotes leadership development and public speaking and provides a physically active livestock program that requires learning by engaging in livestock production and management. Raising an animal is no easy task, requiring a great deal of physical exertion and activity for an extended period of time. Feeding livestock often involves substantial carrying and lifting of grain used for feed. Further, care must be taken in ensuring the upkeep of the building and fences used in production, which is also physically demanding. Given the physical nature of this program, would 4-H be considered an eligible organization under section 12.1(1)(b)?

I think, Mr. Chairman, that the grey area here arises when an organization may not be specifically geared toward physical activity but provides it as part of their program. An example can be found in day homes and after school programs. Child care is the primary service of these organizations; however, in many of these day homes and after school programs a significant amount of physical activity may take place, including such things as organized sports. While these organizations exist to provide the primary service of child care, they also often provide the secondary service of encouraging physical activity. Therefore, given the fact that many of these types of organizations could have a major physical activity component, is it possible that they could be considered an eligible organization?

There is the possibility that the intention of Bill 206 may be lost if individuals find themselves unable to discern what an eligible organization may be. Greater clarity, then, needs to be brought to not only the definition of eligible organizations in section 12.1(1)(b) but to what it would include. In this way we can ensure that we protect the integrity of this bill and allow it to deliver the effectiveness that it was designed for. This would help strengthen Bill 206 even more and ensure my continued support. I hope this will allow other members to realize their support as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. member wish to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity.

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Before we vote on moving this further along the process, there are a number of questions we have to consider. One of them is the question that the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright and I take turns asking in Public Accounts, and that's the value-for-money question. By laying out this

investment, whether it's \$42 million or some other figure, are we going to get the return in reduced health costs? Does the instrument, in other words, deliver its intent? Is there sufficient oversight accountability built into this bill? The money that is being rebated: was the exercise function actually performed? Is there a guarantee that improved participation will result? Is this the best the bill can be? Having had the discussion and raised a variety of concerns, what is the likelihood of the finance department accepting and funding this initiative?

If the answer to any or all of these questions is, "I'm not sure," or "No," then despite the most wonderful intent, if we can't accomplish that intent through this particular instrument, I would suggest that Bill 206 was an interesting discussion, an interesting attempt at improving physical activity and participation. But without further refinement and amendment I would unfortunately say that it falls short of its intention.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Any other hon. member wish to speak on the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed to close debate.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would like to thank you and all members of the Assembly here today who have lent their ears to today's discussion, especially those who rose on the occasion, whether they spoke for the bill or against it or perhaps had some suggestions as to how we might possibly make it better. Along those lines, I would especially like to thank the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere for bringing forth something that I can certainly live with in terms of an amendment. I trust that even more hon. members who were wondering whether they should vote for it or not now have even more reason to vote for it: something that is flexible but also gives enough incentive.

Just to address a few of the comments from some of the members. The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View at one point had drawn reference to some statistical information brought forth back in the spring when it was suggested that according to the old format, there would be \$1,500 worth of credit, and if a quarter of Albertans took advantage of that, that would be \$125 million. We can now divide that by three. Then we throw in the amount of savings when it comes to the lack of health care costs. As I indicated earlier, in other jurisdictions that already have this as part of law, like Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and the country of Canada – in Nova Scotia they use the example of this saving them \$8 million. I believe that it's very much balanced; in fact, the balance is in favour of reducing health care costs.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona referred to running shoes and sports equipment. I shared the information much earlier, in fact in the spring, that I'd had a number of prongs and that this was only one of them in terms of things that we can do to be preventative and really wholesome. Unfortunately, it was suggested: listen, the more you put in there, the more there are reasons to vote against this. I recognize completely that this is stage 1. I wonder if the hon. member might consider bringing forth a private member's bill, perhaps next year, to be stage 2, that would complement this private member's bill at this point.

There were a number of other issues, Mr. Chair, but I believe I covered most of them, actually, in my opening speech. I know that we're short of time today, so I would like to end with these thoughts. Many constituents and people from across the country, to be honest with you, both the public and the media, have said: we finally have a no-nonsense, positive, proactive, preventative, carrot-rather-than-stick, healthy-living incentive bill offering a nonrefundable tax credit

not just for children and youth but for adults, for people who invest their own time and money in eligible organizations and programs geared toward ongoing, sustained, measurable physical activity.

4:50

Yes, we mentioned that it would reduce health care costs, and it is based on federal and provincial bills, so we're not actually the leaders in this respect. I can add the following: it's inclusive, despite what some might think. There are well-defined boundaries, and I can appreciate that there is clarity that was requested by a number of members. The truth is that a bill like this goes to the respective professionals in the different jurisdictions, in this particular case the departments of health and finance. It's the usual process. They are the professionals, and I trust that they, indeed, will be able to take care of this in a very responsible way, balancing the incentive for healthy living and also balancing our books as Albertans.

Being physically active, we know, is the easiest, most natural way to improve our health. It's the most natural way to prevent disease and injury, and it is not bound by age or social group or sex. Physical activity reduces the risk of too many diseases for me to share with you today, Mr. Chair. In spite of the fact that prevention is cited over and over again as the major contributor to better health and increased life expectancies, studies of health expenditures indicate that less than 5 per cent of our resources are devoted to prevention. This would help with that.

Without awareness, Mr. Chair, we don't have much, but with it – it's not enough; we need to make one more step. For better or worse, right or wrong, as human beings sometimes we need a little incentive to support or encourage us to make better choices. In this respect the realm of health is one of the most common. Incentives motivate us. They help us make better and healthier choices. Well, I can say this: control over risk factors are the common threads that link the top causes of death and illness in Alberta, and they're related to our lifestyle.

Mr. Chair, we could do nothing if we don't like everything about this bill, but if we do this, coupled with awareness and education programs that we have and new ones we could add to this in communication plans, I believe many more Albertans would make healthier choices, and we would live up to what health professionals encourage us to do.

I trust that hon. members will vote for Bill 206. I thank you. Thank you, sir.

[The clauses of Bill 206 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Chair:** It's pretty close in sound, so I want to ask a second time. Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Chair:** Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A very interesting process sometimes in this House. I would move that the committee now rise and report Bill 206, the Alberta Personal Income Tax (Physical Activity Credit) Amendment Act, 2008.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Mr. Speaker, I'm proud that the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 206. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The sound is pretty close. I would ask again: does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Some Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed?

**Some Hon. Members:** No.

**The Deputy Speaker:** So ordered.

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

#### Bill 207

#### Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act

[Debate adjourned October 27]

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

**Mr. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 207, the Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act, proposed by the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill. One of the challenges that many democracies all over this world face is the apathy of their electorate, especially of their young voters. Fewer than half of Albertans and fewer than a quarter of young voters in Alberta cast their ballots in the last provincial election. Voter apathy could suggest general voter satisfaction, of course, but it is still alarming that so many youth do not wish to participate in the democratic process. The next generation of leaders will soon need to be mentored, engaged, and up to speed on our political processes. They will need to understand the issues affecting Albertans in order to successfully take the helm of this province in the future.

We need to find creative ways to engage Alberta's young voters. Bill 207 is one proposal for doing this. Another option is to better educate our youth about politics and the democratic process while

they are in school. Currently the Legislative Assembly offers a number of programs intended to get students involved and interested in the democratic process. For example, we offer School at the Leg. School at the Leg. brings grade 6 students to the Legislature Grounds and introduces them to the schedule and life of an MLA. They visit the mock Legislature, tour the grounds, sit in on question period as well as visit and take a picture with their MLA.

High school students can get involved with Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day program. The students shadow their MLA for two days. They find out what our days are like as MLAs and learn how we make laws and represent our communities.

The page program offered by the Sergeant-at-Arms to the Legislative Assembly Office is available for high school and college students. Under this program selected students provide administrative support to the Speaker and members of the legislative Chamber while the House is in session. It also exposes them to us politicians and the parliamentary procedures, issues, and legislation being brought forward in the House.

The Forum For Young Albertans is another program designed to engage high school students. This forum is a nonpartisan political learning opportunity. Through speaker presentations, group discussions, tours, and formal activities students are given the opportunity to listen, learn from, and question politicians. In a private audience with forum participants politicians debate one another on a variety of topics, including education, the environment, and the economy. Political observers, university professors, and the media provide students with a special analysis and insight into provincial politics. Students examine and review concerns of the day through workshops, mock council meetings, and parliamentary discussions.

Finally, the Legislative Assembly also offers college and university students the summer temporary employment program, otherwise known as STEP. MLAs can hire STEP students in their constituency offices to gain experience over their summer break. This is a great opportunity to engage and teach young people what goes on in the day-to-day operations of an MLA's office. It exposes the student to all the programs the government offers and to how an MLA assists constituents. These programs turn the democratic process into something tangible and demonstrate to youth how they can get involved and make a difference in the political process.

5:00

Another avenue through which we can engage youth is to emphasize current events, political history, and critical thinking about government policy in our province's social studies curriculum. Social studies is a school subject, of course, that assists students to acquire the basic knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes needed to be responsible citizens and contributing members of society. The school curriculum for grades 10 through 12 focuses on developing responsible citizens. This includes understanding the role, rights, and responsibilities of a citizen in a democratic society. The course also teaches students to participate constructively in the democratic process by making rational decisions.

As MLAs we must assist teachers in any way possible with this important undertaking. We have to go out and make a concerted effort to get involved in our schools. I recently had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to sit down with a grade 6 class in Airdrie and explain what I do every day as their MLA and how the process works. It was a very, very productive activity and experience. I even was able to present for them in this Legislature a petition and some letters regarding bicycle helmet safety laws. I'll be reporting back to that class shortly on the outcome.

All the government and educational programs I've mentioned help

to get our young people involved and should be commended. They provide youth with a forum in which their voices can be heard and their concerns can be brought to their elected officials. Most importantly, as politicians we need to work with young voters on issues of importance to them.

Young Albertans are stakeholders in this province's future. They are paying off student loans and have started investing and saving money for their retirement. They are starting and developing their careers. They're investing in new homes. They're thinking about or have started their own families. They're thinking of where they will send their young children to school or are considering returning to college to get a diploma. They are driving on Alberta's roads, using Alberta's hospitals, and visiting Alberta's parks. They are starting to see their parents age and feel concern over the health and social pressures of an aging population. Because they are deeply invested stakeholders, we need to find ways to bring this group to the table. If we bring young adults to the table, they will feel more invested in the democratic process and hopefully take ownership of the future of this province.

I urge the members of this House to consider the bill's merits and to join me and the Member for Calgary-North Hill in finding other innovative solutions to involve young Albertans in the democratic process. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, I believe you have spoken.

**Mr. Chase:** Oh, what an unfortunate circumstance. I had such pearls of wisdom to share with this astute audience.

**The Deputy Speaker:** You have already spoken, hon. member. Wait for the next stage of the bill.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Griffiths:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me today to rise to speak to Bill 207, the Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act of 2008. I'm very excited that the Member for Calgary-North Hill has presented this.

You know, in April of 2002 I was elected in a by-election as the sixth-youngest member in the history of this Legislature. I was very proud of that, Mr. Speaker. I spent that entire term being the youngest member. I spent my second term as a member of this Legislature also as the youngest member, and I started to get a little bit worried that I might be the youngest member in here for quite awhile. I was very excited in the last election that four new members came in here that were younger than me. In fact, two of them were younger than me when I was first elected – they pushed me to being the eighth-youngest member ever elected in this House – and one of them is the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill, who has introduced this.

Mr. Speaker, when I was first elected four years ago, I had the distinct pleasure of working on the rural development strategy for the province of Alberta. I found that very exciting because that's what I campaigned on. But after a few years of working on the strategy, writing it and travelling all over the province speaking about rural development and what was necessary, I actually got a little bit frustrated. I started to talk about things that communities were doing that were destroying themselves. You see, everybody has goals and dreams and ambitions, and all of these communities in rural Alberta want to be successful – they really do – but quite often we do things day to day that undermine all those goals and ambitions that we have. We don't realize that the activities we're doing today can undermine those goals that we have.

So I wrote a speech called 13 Ways to Kill a Community, which

I have delivered all over this province – all over this province. I've actually given the speech over 115 times in different communities in this province. One of those 13 ways to kill a community, one of those things that communities do that ultimately leads to their destruction, even though they want to be successful, is to not engage youth. In fact, that's number 3 of the 13 ways to kill your community.

Now, when I speak of youth, Mr. Speaker, I'm not referring to high school students or junior high students. I'm talking about young people who are between the ages of 18 and 35, the group that's most typically disengaged from the political process. Every community knows that it's important to engage youth in their future.

When I give this speech, I often cite a young lady named Shawna Wallace, who worked on the rural development strategy with me. Some people like to joke that I put her on the Rural Development Strategy Task Force that we worked on because I didn't want to be the youngest person in the room anymore, but that's not true. She's a brilliant young woman, who I believe was 22 at the time.

She used to point out to me all the time that as she travelled around talking about how it's important to engage youth, people actually would kind of shrug their shoulders and say things like, "The youth are leaving our community," or "There's no opportunity for youth in our community." She used to tell everybody that instead of saying that, to just imagine that the youth are actually the future. So substitute "future" in those phrases when you say it. Instead of saying, "The youth are leaving our community," say "The future is leaving our community." Instead of saying, "There are no opportunities for youth in our community," try saying, "There are no opportunities for the future in our community," and see if you can still just shrug your shoulders and think it's not such a big deal.

The solution, Mr. Speaker, is succession planning. All over rural Alberta there are tax specialists travelling around telling farmers how to do succession planning, the purpose of which is not just to make sure that farmers don't lose half the farm to the taxman when they sell or transfer it to the next generation but to make sure that the next generation has something left to take over.

Travelling all over this province, I found only one community – I've been to 263 communities out of the 422 speaking about rural development in one way, shape or form – in all of that that does succession planning for town or county council; one, Mr. Speaker. Not one of them did succession planning for main street businesses to make sure that business is transferred to the next generation.

Now, that one community actually has a youth group set up. They go through sort of an election. They're invited to the town or county council meeting, and they're engaged in the process. Their whole goal in this community is to make sure that those young people are fit and trained and prepared for taking over town council when they're ready, when they want to. That's their goal. Now, I'm not saying that every aged person has to get off every town and county council, but we all know that succession planning is critical. You have got to have a blend of age and experience with youth and energy and new ideas if you're going to ensure success.

Now, you've probably all seen – I think the advertisement is probably 20 years old now – that little ring that circles around a young person in the advertisement that says: I can't get a job because I have no experience; I have no experience because I can't get a job. You could say the exact same thing about youth when it comes to government: I have no experience because I'm young; I'm still young and not included because I have no experience. Around and around the circle goes. Opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to engage youth means great succession planning, and it's important for every single level of government, every business, if they're going to have a future, to make sure that they do succession planning.

That young lady I referred to before, Shawna Wallace, also pointed out to me that you can't just invite youth to come in. You can't just say, well, they'll come in when they're ready or even invite them in. She actually talked about three different levels of engagement for young people. She'd say that you can invite them in, ask them what their challenges are, and then you can say thank you very much. You consulted with them, off they go, and then you can work on them. That's wonderful. Or she said that you can invite them in, ask them what their challenges are, and ask them what they think the solutions are, hear them out, and then say thank you very much and maybe try and work on them.

The most meaningful and deepest level of engagement, Mr. Speaker, is when you invite youth in, ask them what their challenges are and what their opportunities are, and then you ask them to help you implement them, help you fix them. That's the most meaningful level of engagement. That's what this government needs to do. That's what every level of government needs to do, and it's not just government. It's business. It's everything. With the rapidly declining voter turnout, with the increasingly apathetic populace, especially those that are typically under 35 and disengaged, this government, all governments have to act soon to engage the next generation.

#### 5:10

Now, we have a youth advisory council for ages 15 to 25, but they operate mostly in children's services and, I believe, comment primarily on youth and justice types of issues. As the mover of the bill pointed out earlier, I believe that youth advisory councils are being proposed in other ministries as well, but, Mr. Speaker, that's a fractured approach. We need one council, one group of people from 18 to 35 who collectively and meaningfully get engaged in a range of issues, collectively so that it's not fragmented. That will help build their confidence. That will help build the notion within them that we actually feel like they're important, that we've drug them into the process and they take us seriously, that their opinion matters.

Now, when you engage youth, you engage the future. With that said, I hope this government organizes itself on matters associated with young Albertans, finds opportunities for them to become more meaningfully engaged. I would like to give them the time to do that. I really would. With the proposal of other youth council organizations I honestly believe there is the intent to do that. So I would like to propose an amendment that I hope will give the time to government to act swiftly and quickly to engage youth in a meaningful way that's collective so that they build up the confidence for when they decide to enter this House or enter government or enter the bureaucracy or any other level.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment I propose moves that the motion for second reading of Bill 207, the Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following: "Bill 207, Young Albertans' Advisory Council Act, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence."

Mr. Speaker, if I may, as the amendment is being passed around, I would just like to extend my congratulations and sincere appreciation to the member who has brought forward this motion, my heartfelt appreciation for bringing this issue to the floor. I look forward to seeing action taken by the government.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Having seen the amendment that has just been distributed, I'd like to recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank all members for entering into debate on this very, very important issue, and in particular I'd like to thank the Member for Battle River-Wainwright. I have to admit being involved with the Progressive Conservative Party in my younger years and being very impressed with his desire to get involved in government. The type of youth and energy that he brought certainly was a motivation for myself in putting my name forward this past spring. There's no doubt that he presented a very, very compelling and interesting reason why we need to look at some of these issues.

In fact, I would support the amendment, Mr. Speaker. In doing so, I do want to chat about a couple of things. One is that I want to make something very clear. During debate there was some conversation about age groups and why 25 to 35. As was mentioned by some members, we do have a Youth Advisory Panel set up by this government, and it does take into consideration and include youth in Alberta right across this province from 15 to 22 years of age. I do want to clarify that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona during debate mentioned: where do people, you know, younger than the age of 25 get their voice? It is that panel that gets their voice.

However, I will say this. The Member for Battle River-Wainwright indicated that, you know, they mainly deal with Children and Youth Services issues and Justice issues. I can tell you that as chair of the Youth Secretariat and chair of that panel I find myself trying to rein in the enthusiasm in the ideas of these young people because they want to talk about a lot more than just those issues, okay? I think one of the challenges that we face as a government is not necessarily about engaging youth. I think it was very clear throughout the debate that we recognize this as a very, very important issue in our society. The challenge is: how do we do it? How do we most effectively do it? I believe that this amendment allows for us to look at that and decide how we want to do that.

Bringing forward this bill was just one way to get something on the table to have that discussion. We do have the Youth Advisory Panel, and as I mentioned in my earlier comments, it does look like the Minister of Education is bringing in a panel as well, to address students' views on educational issues. My question is: how many panels do we want? I think that we don't want to provide multiple entryways and make it confusing for young people to get involved. If we're out advocating that one panel is the best way for youth to get involved, let's make that panel the panel, and let's have access to ministers on whatever issues they feel like they want to consult young Albertans with. This is why I do support this amendment. I think we need to look at all ways of engaging youth and come up with a strategy that is focused and specific.

The other issue is, I think, that we need to look at the age distribution. What do we consider youth in this province, how do we consider engaging them, and at what age group is the cut-off? Sometimes those can be very arbitrary, and I think that we could have a very interesting discussion on what that might be. I would offer a suggestion that for the 35 age group in today's society and that cut-off: there's a very distinct difference between them and older generations. We've gone through a tremendous amount of changes in our society as to where the views, the values, and, I guess, the apathy is unique to this particular age group.

If I'm sitting here 20 years from now or, you know, even 10 years from now, I would suggest that it would be very valuable for myself to have such a panel in place so that I can get those views and hear those voices because at that point in time I would consider myself to be slightly out of touch with the reality of those younger generations. That is simply the basic premise of why I've brought this forward. I think governments have an obligation. While I do feel fortunate to be sitting in what could be termed as, let's say, the under-35 caucus

of this Legislature, that isn't always the case. Historically we know that that group is underrepresented within the government structure, in the democratic structure. This is just one mechanism that I've brought forward to facilitate discussion of how we can be more inclusive of that voice.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would again thank the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright for bringing this forward. I hope that we can have in the future more productive discussions on how we engage youth in this province going forward. Thank you.

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

5:20

**Mr. Chase:** Thank you. Speaking to the amendment, I support the amendment because it falls along the lines of what I believe is missing in this 25 to 35 age category. I was suggesting that the title of the bill be changed to Bill 207, a not-so-young Albertans' advisory council act, because of the 25 to 35 age range. The motion is in order in that we know that we'll be beginning the spring

Legislature on February 3, so this can be resurrected and taken out of a six-month retirement, keeping in mind that over those six months a number of young individuals will have graduated out of the 35 age category, but hopefully there will be some current 24-year-olds that could be recruited to take their places. I do support the motion and look forward to further discussion six months hence.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other hon. member on the amendment?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 207 carried]

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

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In view of the hour I would move that we call it 5:30 and adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:22 p.m.]







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