



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Safety and Services

Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research,
Public Presentation

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Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services

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MacDonald, Hugh, Edmonton-Gold Bar (AL)
Rogers, George, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon (PC)
Sandhu, Peter, Edmonton-Manning (PC)
Xiao, David H., Edmonton-McClung (PC)

Also in Attendance

Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND)

Participants

Kathy Belton	Associate Director, Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research
Marcus Gurske	Director, Play It By Ear Productions

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9 a.m.

Wednesday, June 9, 2010

[Mr. Drysdale in the chair]

The Chair: It's 9 o'clock, so I'd like to call the meeting to order. Welcome, everybody, to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services. I'd ask everybody around the table to introduce themselves. We're supposed to have one person joining us on the phone, Heather Forsyth.

Mrs. Forsyth: Hi there.

The Chair: Heather, good morning. We just called the meeting to order. We were just about to go around the table and introduce ourselves, so I guess you can introduce yourself to start with.

Mrs. Forsyth: Good morning, everybody. It's Heather Forsyth from Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: George.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. George Rogers, MLA, Leduc-Beaumont-Devon.

Mr. Johnson: Good morning. Jeff Johnson, Athabasca-Redwater.

Mr. Xiao: Good morning. David Xiao, Edmonton-McClung.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, committee research co-ordinator, Legislative Assembly Office.

Ms LeBlanc: Stephanie LeBlanc, legal research officer, Legislative Assembly Office.

Mr. MacDonald: Hugh MacDonald, Edmonton-Gold Bar. Good morning, Mr. Chairman.

Ms Calahasen: Pearl Calahasen, Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Sandhu: Good morning. Peter Sandhu, MLA, Edmonton-Manning. Thank you.

Mr. Cao: Good morning. MLA, Calgary-Fort, Wayne Cao.

Ms Rempel: Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

The Chair: Chair Wayne Drysdale, MLA for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

I guess to start with this morning we'll deal with some housekeeping rules, that being participation by teleconference. It is allowed, and we have a couple of options we can go with. We can either make a motion here this morning that for all meetings of the committee from now on we will accept teleconferencing, or else we can make a motion at the end of every meeting that the next meeting will allow teleconferencing. We've got two options there.

Mr. Rogers: If I may, Mr. Chairman. That's rather cumbersome, to do it every meeting. I would with your indulgence move that on an ongoing basis this committee would accept members teleconferencing in.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rogers. Is there any discussion on that?

Mrs. Forsyth: I'll second that as I'm calling from Calgary.

The Chair: We don't need a seconder.

If no further discussion, everybody in favour? Anyone opposed? Okay. The motion is carried. Thank you very much.

The next item is approval of the agenda. Does anybody have any additions or changes? Is that a motion by Ms Calahasen to accept the agenda as presented? Thank you. Any further discussion? All in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried.

The next item on the agenda is the minutes from our previous meeting of April 13. Any additions or changes to those minutes? If not, I'd like a motion to accept the minutes. Moved by Mr. Johnson to accept the minutes as presented. Any comments on that? If not, all in favour? Opposed? The motion is carried. Thank you.

Okay. We just had joining us Mr. Boutilier.

Mr. Boutilier: Good morning. Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The Chair: Good morning, Guy.

The next item on our agenda is the presentation from the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. I'll ask the presenters to take a seat at the table now, please.

Now, I believe you were here to hear the introductions from everybody, so I'll just ask you to introduce yourselves to the committee.

Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research

Ms Belton: Good morning. My name is Kathy Belton. I'm the associate director of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research at the university.

Mr. Gurske: Good morning. My name is Marcus Gurske. I am responsible for government and regulatory affairs for ACICR.

The Chair: Good morning. I'll give you the floor and ask you, if you would, to give your presentation now, please.

Mr. Gurske: Thank you very much, Chair. Going forward, we'd like this morning to discuss – I just have to queue up our presentation here. There we go. We come before you to provide information on ACICR and the activities that it undertakes within its scope and mandate. I will turn it over to Kathy Belton now to start our presentation.

Kathy.

Ms Belton: Thank you. Hopefully, today I'll provide you with an overview of ACICR. I'll also share with you the magnitude of the injury problem in Alberta, and I'll seek your support to promote the services of ACICR as a resource within the government of Alberta.

Before we start, I think it's important to give you a little idea of where our vision is for Alberta. This is not to take away from any of the envisioning exercises that you have done as a committee or caucus has done or the government has done overall. This is just where we see our vision from.

Imagine, if you will, an Alberta where elderly people lead a fit and healthy lifestyle; where people live long and healthy lives thanks to the lowest injury death rate world-wide; where playgrounds are safe havens where kids can explore and play together without fear of injury; where motor vehicle accidents happen less frequently, leaving fewer people with permanent disabilities and even less with a lifetime of grief over a loved one lost in a motor vehicle collision; where a fully integrated injury control system is in place that spans

infrastructure, education, and health care; where thanks to the world's overall highest awareness of injury, risks, and preventative measures, perfect safety records on job sites become the norm rather than the exception; where aboriginal youth enjoy the same standards of health and safety as all Canadians; and where the aboriginal injury rate is brought in line with the rest of Canada.

Imagine an Alberta that attracts people not only for our strong economy but for our leading safety record. Imagine an Alberta where more people will be able to live safe, healthy lives and be free from the impact of injuries. Imagine Alberta being the safest place to live in the world. That's what ACICR's vision is all about, making Alberta the safest place in the world.

Right now in Alberta for every one death that we have, we have 30 hospitalizations, and 246 people are treated in emergency rooms. In 2008 1,700 Albertans lost their lives due to injury. That's more than four deaths per day. Another 54,000 were seen in hospitals – those were people that were actually admitted to hospitals due to injuries – and another 436,000 visited emergency departments due to injuries. That does not account for the injuries that are treated in doctors' offices.

If we look at where Alberta compares to the rest of the country, we see that Alberta's hospitalization rate of 736 per 100,000 is the second highest province in Canada, behind Saskatchewan, and well above the Canadian average of 534.

Using 2004 injury data, the economic burden due to injuries in Alberta was estimated at \$2.94 billion: \$2.26 billion was due to unintentional injuries alone, and those are the injuries that can most be prevented. Injuries cost Albertans, like I said, \$2.9 billion, and this translates into \$918 for every Albertan man, woman, and child. Using the common measure of potential years of life lost, we see that Alberta led the country again with 1,479.2 years of life lost, which is really high compared to the Canadian average of 993.

9:10

The impact of injuries is felt on every level in Alberta, not just health care, from employers who have to hire replacement workers to the community who provides support to the injured and their families to society who not only cover the direct cost through health care and emergency services but also those indirect costs and unquantifiable costs of lost potential.

Alberta's foundation is built on stakeholder and government support. From 1999, when we began, we have had strong stakeholder and government input and support to our direction. We are part of the School of Public Health at the University of Alberta, and we have shown about 11 years of proven history. Within our foundation we have always linked our goals and our priorities to the broader goals of our funders and supporters. Then you see the goals of your government and Alberta Health and Wellness, our primary funder, and the University of Alberta, and you can see that we link to those.

Moving forward, our priorities for 2010 to 2013 are reducing falls amongst older people. We have had a very successful campaign going with the support of Alberta Health and Wellness and the Alberta Medical Association and Alberta Seniors looking at reducing falls amongst older people. Going forward, we're going to be looking at the issue of poisoning. It's one of those issues that hasn't been dealt with very succinctly either in this province or world-wide. We're also going to be looking at addressing injuries to vulnerable populations, including our aboriginal people. We're going to support the Alberta suicide prevention strategy and the Alberta traffic safety plan going forward.

Highlights from our previous years have been some awareness campaigns: the preventable injuries and the finding balance cam-

paigns. I hope you've all seen examples of these if you've watched Global TV. We also have networks throughout the province of injury prevention practitioners and seniors related to the falls issue. We have also worked with Alberta Education and developed a guideline for physical activity in Alberta schools. Those are based on our physical activity curriculum, and those have been held up in law as a minimum standard for school boards to ensure the safety of our children. We have also partnered across Canada to develop the Canadian injury prevention curriculum and the Canadian falls prevention curriculum, which are now held up internationally as gold standards.

We have also produced a number of injury in Alberta data brochures, fact sheets, and reports that go into more detail about the extent and nature of our injury issue in the province. We have held countless conferences, seminars, and workshops to pass on our learning to stakeholders and practitioners throughout the province. We have worked, again, through a cross-ministry initiative co-ordinated by Health to develop an implementation plan for the Alberta injury control strategy. We have worked with acute-care services in the development of a provincial trauma proposal, which will now make Alberta's trauma system one of the strongest in the country. We have put all of our resources, including some hard to find information, on our online resource library, which is accessible anywhere in the province.

What we do in a nutshell is that we increase the awareness and commitment of Albertans to injury prevention, we strengthen partnerships amongst injury control stakeholders, we build and sustain capacity and capability to deliver effective injury prevention programs, we increase the availability of and access to comprehensive provincial injury surveillance data, and we support and develop the implementation of public policy related to injury prevention.

What we can offer you as a committee and members of the government is access to the best evidence to make decisions regarding injury prevention programs, strategies, initiatives, and policy. We offer access to comprehensive provincial injury surveillance data, and we can provide you access to numerous stakeholders across the province who are actually doing injury prevention at the ground level.

In conclusion, preventable injuries in Alberta are claiming the lives and forever changing the futures of dozens of Albertans each day in this province. ACICR can help you address this important health issue. All you need to do is ask. We're hoping that you'll work with us towards an injury-free Alberta in which we can live, work, and play.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

I'm just keeping a speakers list here. Now I will take questions to you from the floor and start with Mr. Johnson, please.

Mr. Johnson: Thanks, Kathy. Thanks for being here today and for all the good work you folks do. I've got a couple of kind of long-winded questions or multifaceted questions. One is: I wonder if you can give us a sense of your organization and, you know, how many employees you have, how you're funded, what your budget is like. I'm curious about that. Then I've got a second question for you after that.

Ms Belton: Okay. We currently have a staff of about 32. Sixteen of those are regional traffic safety co-ordinators that have been hired by ACICR but work primarily with Alberta Transportation to implement the traffic safety plan. If you remember, that was an initiative started by Premier Stelmach when he was the Minister of Transportation. The other 16 staff we have: their specialities range

from surveillance to research to program development. We have a budget from Alberta Health and Wellness of \$1.585 million. It's a very small budget compared to the issue at hand.

Mr. Johnson: You talked about access to information and the data that you guys track, which is really important. You can't make good decisions if you don't have good information, so I'm wondering what you can tell us about the trends in injuries in Alberta. What are the fastest growing areas? I'm specifically interested in the recreational off-highway vehicle situation – the quads, the snowmobiles – what you're seeing there and what kind of information you have. I'm asking because I worked on and chaired the Alberta Recreation Corridors Coordinating Committee for Minister Ady last year for a while, and it was very difficult to get solid, good information on what was happening there. Tell me a little bit about what work you might be doing in that arena.

Ms Belton: With respect to the ATV issue, which is the only really off-highway vehicle issue that we're dealing with currently, we have had a working committee going for about the past year and a half specifically to look at where the evidence shows us we should be going. We have developed a set of common messaging that is being used going forward by all stakeholders, including the off-highway manufacturers and distributors in the province.

One of the most, I guess, contentious issues right now in ATV injuries is the issue of youth-size ATVs and whether or not there's any evidence going forward that they would make a difference. We don't have any solid numbers on that yet, but we are making the intuitive leap that youth-size ATVs will definitely make a difference down the line. We have made some recommendations in terms of legislation going forward: helmets, minimum ages, training, all of those things that would be presumed to be helpful in the literature.

In terms of the injury rates overall, they are going down. I wish I could say that they were going down as fast as we would like. That's not happening, but we are seeing a decrease over the last 10 years. I'd like to think it's in part due to the good work that we're doing, but it's really hard to prove cause and effect on such a broad issue with one agency.

The other part of your question was . . .

Mr. Gurske: Recreational vehicles.

Ms Belton: Recreation vehicles. I touched on that. One of the issues we have with recreation vehicles: we really don't get a good handle on the numbers that are actually using them and how often they're being used, like the hours of use and the miles driven. Until we get some way to look at that, we're in, you know, a bit of a hit or miss.

Mr. Gurske: I'd like to add more information to the answer. For recreational vehicles, too, there is what is used on a farm for recreation but what is also used for work. That does come into play as well. We're speaking primarily of quads, where now, you know, they've replaced the truck, the half-ton, when they go out and do the fencing. Sometimes we have to keep in mind how recreation vehicles are used in a work environment as well, not just purely for pleasure.

9:20

One of the things, too, I think I can say with confidence is that it is not our intent to limit or stop every injury. We would like to work with the government to help Albertans take smart risks, not stupid risks. That is the intent of the centre with the way the programs are

structured specifically in communicating with the public. We want to educate them so they make the best decision possible to take into account their own personal safety and those around them.

Mr. Johnson: Thank you.

The Chair: Next on the list, Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Kathy, thank you for your presentation; Marcus, for your attendance as well. Noticing from the start where you ranked Alberta and the rest of the country and, of course, Alberta ranking right behind Saskatchewan, I'm just wondering, you know, about some of what's behind that. I'm sure you've got some of that information. It seems to me that the nature of the industrial work – I think particularly of the oil industry in Alberta and Saskatchewan – would play a role in that. I'm just wondering if you'd give some comments on that.

I didn't scan the map of the country long enough to focus on Ontario. I think of, again, very high industrial activity in Ontario, but certainly, for lack of a better term, I'd say more civilized industrial activity. Could you give me some comments relative to what's happening in Alberta and Saskatchewan that leads to those numbers and maybe how that compares to the size of industry in Ontario and their results?

Ms Belton: Could you go, Marcus, to the slide on hospitalizations, which was the first Alberta map?

Yeah. When it comes to why Albertans are at so high a risk of injury, we've been studying that for a number of years, and we have come to some conclusions that Albertans have a different perspective when it comes to taking risks. We tend to be a population that plays hard and works hard, but we also need to mix into that, you know, the idea that we can take smart risks. I mean, we're not about preventing all injuries, as Marcus said. We'd just like to prevent those catastrophic ones. I think a lot of our culture has to come into play with that. You have to understand that the data that I present is only for Albertans, so the influx of people that we see from other provinces coming to work in Alberta isn't accounted for in the data that I presented. These are just Albertans being injured in Alberta, okay?

When it comes to Ontario, they have a different mindset there, if anybody has spent any time in Ontario. They're much more, I guess, happy to have the government take a lead when it comes to implementing policies and public policies regarding injury prevention. I mean, they regularly have pool fencing bylaws. They have helmet laws, you know. They have booster seat legislation. There are a lot of things that have been put in place in those jurisdictions that I think have affected the way that they view injuries.

Mr. Rogers: Heavier regulations, then.

Ms Belton: Heavy regulations. I'm not suggesting that Alberta go that way by any stretch of the imagination. I think that we can get there by education and awareness with some healthy public policy in the mix.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you. I have one further question, Mr. Chairman. On slide 13 you talked about the ranking of the education programs through your centre and certainly ranking very high. I'm just wondering why that's not translating across our population into, I guess, more encouraging numbers in terms of safety. Or do you see a trend? Are we starting to pay more attention? Are these programs starting to sink in?

Ms Belton: I'd say that the programs are starting to sink in. The programs that I mentioned, the curriculums, are only, I guess, targeted to the practitioners. So while we're increasing the level of knowledge and skills amongst the practitioners to address the injury issue, that hasn't translated yet to action on the ground. I think that's five years out from now.

Mr. Rogers: I'm guessing that's probably something that we as a government could work with you on to get that message out to change the culture of the population.

Ms Belton: Yes. We would appreciate that.

Mr. Rogers: Thank you.

Ms Belton: You're welcome.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next Mr. Xiao, followed by Ms Calahasen.

Mr. Xiao: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, I'd like to welcome you to our committee. I have a few questions. I'd like to concentrate my questions on workplace injuries. For the last number of years our lost-time claim rate has dropped considerably in Alberta, but our death rate has increased dramatically and is still very high. The reason I'm asking is that I happened to be the chair in the last two years as ministerial adviser of Alberta's safety committee. That really bothers me. I want to know what you have done in the area of working with the stakeholders. I'm talking about employers, the industrial sectors, and also employees, the training. Can you talk about that?

Ms Belton: I should have made this clear at the start of my presentation, but our main focus is not workplace injuries. We have a whole department within Alberta labour that is focused on that. Whenever possible we support their activities, but we don't do any direct employer or workplace injury issues at all.

Mr. Xiao: Are those data, the numbers, included in your presentation as well or not?

Ms Belton: The data that we have is the hospital data. If they went to the hospital, they were included in that data, so the deaths would be included. The lost-time claims: I think that we as a province have done a great job in ensuring that those small injuries that happen on the job site don't end up in a lost-time claim. The people are reassigned to do something else; therefore, they don't show up in the data.

Mr. Xiao: But they are still included in these statistics.

Ms Belton: Only if they sought medical attention in an acute-care facility.

Mr. Xiao: Yeah. But I just assume that the deaths . . .

Ms Belton: The deaths would be there.

Mr. Xiao: . . . would be there. That means that you are not actually presenting a number which is really, I would say, completely related to what you do. Is that the fact?

Mr Gurske: It is something that we are working towards. Our

numbers and our data, again, about Alberta injury prevention, safety are Albertans in Alberta that are reported. At the moment we have started to engage the department responsible that Kathy mentioned earlier to offer our services and work together. It's a work-in-progress, quite frankly. We hope to, again, share our knowledge, share the information, play an active role in the policy development so that we can start to affect some of the workplace injuries. But it's something that traditionally ACICR has not been right in on. We're hoping that through our initiatives of reaching out to the departments and offering our services, we can start to be brought in to help address some of these concerns.

Is our data complete? I would probably say, in relation to your question, that, no, it is not complete. But, again, it is the most accurate piece of data that we have to work with. How we've built the data out going forward: again, we're looking, for example, to include agricultural farm safety, how we prevent injuries in our agricultural sector. It's an evolving process.

I apologize that we can't give you the direct answer to your question because we don't have that direct answer.

Mr. Xiao: Okay. Then I'll just move away from workplace injuries.

We are now entering the holiday season. I just assume this would be the period that a lot of incidents occur, right? My question is: do you have an educational strategy in terms of working with the schools, with the community organizations to educate the kids, the families on how to prevent those incidents from happening?

9:30

Ms Belton: If you're talking specifically about traffic safety in terms of motor vehicle collisions during the summer months, we work steadily with the office of traffic safety within Transportation to address those issues. We also work in schools through the no regrets program, which is a program run out of Ontario and the SmartRisk foundation. It's a program that offers peer-to-peer teaching in terms of: we educate or work with a teacher and students within a high school, and they go back to the school and offer supports to their peers to prevent injuries. That's, you know, motor vehicle collisions; that's diving; everything from drowning to how to prevent simple things like sliding down a mountain.

Mr. Xiao: Mr. Chair, if I may, can I have my last supplementary question?

The Chair: You've had about three, but I'll give you one more.

Mr. Xiao: Okay. Thank you very much. This is early morning, right?

My last question will be: what's your goal? To come to this committee, what did you want to accomplish?

Ms Belton: My goal is to make you aware that we're out there. We're funded by government, and we can be a resource to each and every one of the members of this committee when they're looking at policies or when they have an issue within their constituency.

Mr. Gurske: I think, also to add to that, if you go back to the numbers, quite frankly, that we started our presentation with, the 2-plus billion dollars of health care related costs, our goal is to lower those costs. I think it's fair to say that is one of our main goals and objectives. We cannot do that by ourselves. We need the support of the individual members of the Legislature and the co-operation of the committee members to reach our goal, which, basically, will impact all Albertans in a positive manner.

Mr. Xiao: Thank you.
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.
Next Ms Calahasen, followed by Mr. Cao.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you very much. Nice to see you again, Kathy.

Ms Belton: Nice to see you, Pearl.

Ms Calahasen: Welcome to both of you.

I just want to ask a few questions, but I want to also make a statement. I want to thank your group, the Centre for Injury Control & Research, for what you have been able to do. Number one, you have done some really great research. Number two, you have targeted areas where there was a need for action to take place, and without being intrusive, you have been able to do that quite well, so I want to congratulate you on being able to do that. I hope one day we can say that there'll be zero injuries in Alberta. That will be something that we can wish for for a long, long time. But in the meantime I think there are some real concerns relative to some of the areas of deaths that are caused.

I'm reading the information that you have provided. You have indicated that on the children's side and injuries in Alberta, whatever it is, it appears the males seem to be the ones that are more prone to be in an accident or have sustained injuries. When I look at the children and youth injuries in Alberta, I see that males accounted for 67 per cent of injury deaths on the overall injuries; motor vehicle collisions, 66 per cent; falls for children, males were 61 per cent. When I'm thinking about some of the things that you're doing in terms of your priority actions, I don't see anything in there that talks about that kind of situation for children and specific to males, so I want to know what it is that you're intending to do or are doing to be able to address that specific issue.

Mr. Gurske: I think, to lead off, the first thing you have to understand is that being a male, we are at a natural disposition. I'll turn it over to Kathy, then.

Ms Belton: Marcus is right. All of our data sources show us that young males are at higher risk of injury. What the centre is doing right now is looking at why that is. We work, again, with the office of traffic safety and some of their programs that are identified for high-risk youth, especially males, and are working with them to increase their seat belt use.

But we know that risky behaviours come in groups. If you speed, you're also going to for the most part be a smoker, you know, be a drinker of sorts. So it's not just one aspect that we can deal with. I think we need to address this systematically. Children and youth are part of our vulnerable populations, and they are part of our priority areas for the next three years going forward.

Mr. Gurske: If I may add, there are some societal trends we have to obviously face and be aware of. Males from a very early age on are encouraged to be rough and tumble. You know, it also plays into the psyche of the Albertan, being a maverick, to be able to go out and be playful and so forth. But, again, it's smart risks versus stupid risks. Males, unfortunately, have a tendency, as Kathy said, in groups and numbers, activities that take place – there are some societal trends and attitudes that, of course, we can't just change overnight. So it's something that we look to attract some attention to. It will take time to change those attitudes.

Ms Calahasen: My second question has to do with high risk again, and that's with the aboriginal populations. The priority areas are identified without identifying which group you're going to be dealing with in terms of addressing the concerns, and I think most of the aboriginal community can fall into those priority areas. So my question is: who and what groups of people are you partnering with to address the issues and to even build strategies to address the aboriginal population? To me, when I see the numbers, they jump out at me.

I want to know what it is we're doing, especially in some of the small communities where there are some real issues relative to the communities, so the suicide injury is really high. What kind of partnerships are you formulating? What strategies are you intending to use to be able to address that? I'd like to know in the next one to two to three years what you would like to see happen relative to those kinds of things.

Ms Belton: Over the last three years ACICR has been partnering with aboriginals from around the province to develop an aboriginal injury prevention strategy. Going forward with that strategy, they're now just putting the final touches on an implementation plan, and their main focus is going to be motor vehicle collisions and then suicide.

One of the issues that we have going forward with suicide is that the issues around suicide are also social, so it's a whole context issue that we have to deal with in order to address most of the issues or factors that are involved in suicide. It's the poverty and the drug and alcohol abuse, and I would say that's across the board; that's not just an aboriginal population issue. Suicide is our leading cause of injury death in this province, so the centre is really looking at what we can do in that area.

We are also working through the regional traffic safety co-ordinators. We have a co-ordinator in every treaty area, and we have two for the Métis issues going forward. They're looking at strategies and actually working in communities like Gift Lake, as an example, to see how they can address the aboriginal issues.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you. The other question I have is on choking. It seems to be the largest – when I read your information, it's a huge concern.

Ms Belton: It's a huge issue.

Ms Calahasen: So I'm wondering: do you deal with the parents? How do you deal with the choking issue in terms of educating people as to how you can prevent or even help during a choking incident?

Ms Belton: We are right now starting a project to work with pediatricians from across the province to address not only the choking issue but the top five issues with children's injuries. What we're doing is having posters that will be in pediatricians' offices that pediatricians can speak to. Plus, there's a tear-off sheet for parents when they come in – it's called a prescription for safety – that the parent can take away with them to address the issues related to their child's development.

Ms Calahasen: Thank you.
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Cao, followed by Mr. MacDonald.

9:40

Mr. Cao: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for

bringing to our attention this very important matter in our society. I have a few questions and probably some thoughts around it as well. First of all, we talked about the funding. You said that Alberta Health and Wellness gave you funding, but do you have other sources, like from the private sector or donations, charity?

Ms Belton: We do receive some money through donations, but it's minimal. We're talking under \$10,000. The regional traffic safety positions are funded by Alberta Transportation, and that's to the tune of about \$1.5 million. Our core funding, though, comes directly from Alberta Health and Wellness with support: because we're housed within the University of Alberta, we get all of our infrastructure from the University of Alberta at no cost. That's the extent of our funding.

Mr. Gurske: Additionally, when we do awareness campaigns – for example, the seniors' falls prevention campaign Finding Balance – we seek funding partners and sponsorships within that. It's an awareness campaign, so we approach our TV partner, and we look to leverage dollars spent on bought media. For example, for every dollar we spend, we try then to value-add it so that we get three dollars back in return value from the partner that way. Of course, that carries through with other media partners and other program partners as well.

Mr. Cao: That's very good. Probably just a comment here. When I was working in corporations, as a corporation we were also very careful to care for the employees, staff. I happened to be a supervisor of one of the groups called "health and safety" at that time. We instilled the notion into the management of the total company that the first item on the staff meeting agenda is safety. Even though we worked in an office in a building in Calgary – it's less risky than working out in a refinery – we did address that. At every meeting of staff everywhere in the company the first item was safety. We even looked up, made sure things won't drop on your head or that a drawer won't come half out and you could trip on it. I don't know if that's been instilled somewhere, but that could be something that's very useful.

The other question, probably, is about education and public awareness. I'd like to know whether you have any partnerships with AMA or St. John Ambulance.

Then on the technology side do you use high tech, I could say – YouTube videos, that sort of hit – scaring people, in fact, to be careful in that aspect? I feel it's very effective in some ways. Do you have some comments on that?

Ms Belton: First of all, I'd like to comment on your safety meetings. I do think that they're a wonderful way to get the message out. Unfortunately, what we see with a lot of Albertans is that they're very safe on the job, but it's when they get home that all the safety goes out the window. We're actually trying to address that because we know that that happens.

Mr. Cao: Partnerships with St. John or AMA.

Ms Belton: Yeah. We have a partnership, as Marcus said, with the Alberta Medical Association for our seniors' falls campaign. We have a partnership with St. John Ambulance in terms of some of the projects that we work on. They're on a project-by-project basis, our partnerships.

In terms of awareness campaigns, we have moved more to the edgy side of campaigns, and I think we have seen some movement. Now Albertans are starting to see that injuries are a higher issue in

terms of their own personal safety, above heart disease and cancer. That was found in our last survey of Albertans. I think that those ads have a place. Unfortunately, we get some backlash every once in a while because some Albertans don't like those types of messages. But I do agree that they are effective within certain populations.

Mr. Gurske: Coming back, I'd like to also add to the workplace safety. There are great operators out there, and we try to reach out and work with them. One example is Waiward Steel, Don Oborowsky. He was very innovative in the way he took his hand-held personal PDA, a BlackBerry, and had a program set up so that every company vehicle he had had a speed governor monitor system on it. Basically, when the vehicle exceeded the legal speed limit within the area, it was tracked by GPS, and he received a notification on his hand-held.

At the beginning I'm sure everybody would expect that the number of e-mails he was getting went through the roof. I'm sure his data plan took quite a jump. But over time he realized that the workers that he was letting go or taking out of that responsibility of driving a vehicle were actually increasing his productivity. That social change does start to take effect. People realize that when you do something, for every action there's a reaction. If you speed, you are basically disciplined for that. So there are good operators, and we like to work with them.

We've met with Minister Lukaszuk and some of his officials. He has a list of companies and operators within the province that are not in compliance or have a poor safety record. We requested of him that we can start to work with them. We can share our knowledge and expertise and help them change their social attitudes and workplace attitudes to bring them into compliance and be better operators in the province.

Mr. Cao: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next Mr. MacDonald, followed by Mr. Sandhu.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate your time this morning and the information that you provided in advance. My first question is regarding that information that you provided. It centres around your chart on agriculture machine-related deaths between 1990 and 2006 in Alberta. Now, we all know that WCB, unfortunately, does not cover farm workers. I'm reading here that "over the 17 years there has been a 37 per cent increase in the rate of machine-related deaths per 100,000 agriculture population." How does that compare to other jurisdictions in Canada?

Ms Belton: I don't know the answer to that off the top of my head. I would hazard a guess that it is probably right around the top. I think we've probably seen similar jumps in Saskatchewan and Ontario. The issue with agricultural injuries is that our farming population is getting older. As we know, when people age, they lose their ability to react to situations as fast as you or I would.

Mr. Gurske: In addition, we can understand, with our aging population, the sweet spot of someone's productivity. Early on they're learning how to use the machinery. They're developing their comfort level around it. They get to the middle age of their life, and they've hit their peak efficiency. As Kathy said, when they get older, when they age, of course their reaction times are slower. Getting on and off the combine, working with intricate machinery: there is room for error there, or that margin of error increases. Of

course, we've seen our agricultural population shrink over the last number of years as well. An average workday for us is eight to 10 hours. An average workday for a retired farmer is still eight to 10 hours, and an average workday for a working farmer is 16 hours. There are certain things, again, that are in play there that drive that number.

Mr. MacDonald: I also read here where you're in collaboration with the office of the Chief Medical Examiner to collect agricultural-related death data. "Agricultural-related death data up to and including December 31, 2006 has been completed and submitted." A provincial agriculture-related injury report is to be released in the winter of 2009. I have two questions regarding that. The first one would be: would the age of the worker in the agricultural sector at the time of death be in that report?

9:50

Ms Belton: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: The injury-related report to be released in the winter of 2009, you may have provided it to our office. I apologize. I'm requesting now both reports. It would be great if I could have those.

Ms Belton: No problem. They'll be sent to your office today.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Gurske: Did we answer your first question?

Mr. MacDonald: Not, to be quite candid, satisfactorily. I believe there are a lot of employees in the agricultural sector who are not near retirement age. As the individual in our caucus dealing with injuries in the agricultural sector, I'm not satisfied. The ones that I'm in contact with and are familiar with are much younger than anticipated retirement ages.

Mr. Gurske: If I understand correctly, you're asking us if we can justify or give some insight as to why the rate of injuries related to agricultural workers is as high as it is within Alberta.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes.

Mr. Gurske: If we can take another crack at that answer, I think part of it is, again, the aging population. We are seeing fewer people go into the agricultural industry than we have in the last generation, maybe generation and a half. With their workload, again, what you do in an average workday, the hours you work, there is greater expectation to achieve certain goals and outcomes to have a productive farm environment or productive farm business. Some of these, again, relate to how much you do in a day, your ability to do it, the knowledge around working and handling the machinery where you're not hurting yourself but you're actually hitting your peak productivity. I think a lot of things go into answering your question. Those are some of the factors.

Kathy, do you have anything you want to add?

Ms Belton: I think that if we look at the stress that's on farmers lately in terms of decreased markets – both grain and beef producers are down – that added stress probably has a lot to do with the number of injuries we're seeing because farmers are working longer hours with less rest and with less help, too. I think it's a multitude of factors. What I will do is send you the reports we've done, both

the new ones and the old ones, so you can actually see for yourself where the issues are.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I appreciate that.

Mr. Gurske: One additional piece, the ACICR now houses the farm surveillance injury program for agriculture, which was formerly at – was it Western, Kathy?

Ms Belton: It was at Queen's University.

Mr. Gurske: At Queen's. Thank you.

That's now here. We can actually now, by housing that program here, start to tailor some of the data collection so that we have a more fulsome understanding and a better picture of what it looks like in our province.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. We have to understand, whenever we're discussing this, that it's not just owner-operators of farms. It's employees of corporate farms, who are not regulated by OH and S, who are not under WCB, and the hours that they work are totally different than, say, the hours the individuals in Mr. Oborowsky's steel factory would be working.

Mr. Gurske: I don't think we disagree with you at all. We strongly agree with you that agricultural hours are very, very different than a traditional industrial workplace.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I have some more questions. I can go back on the list later, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: Okay. I'll put you back on the list, then, Mr. MacDonald.

Next Mr. Sandhu, followed by Mr. Kang.

Mr. Sandhu: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I'd like to thank you, Kathy and the team, on raising awareness in society to reduce death and accidents. I think we need to do it to save Albertans.

My friends David Xiao and Mr. Cao touched on construction work related injuries. I owned a construction company for 18 years in the city here. It really bothered me that about eight weeks ago a painter jumped on the stepladder, more than eight feet. He fell off the stepladder and died, about, I think, eight weeks ago, that accident.

Is there any way we can educate home builders or the city of Edmonton, where they're pulling permits, or make a part of the permit some kind of declaration signed by whoever is pulling the permit, a home builder or somebody who wants to build his own house? That adds up at the end of the year on your data. You know, it's not accidents on the road, but still, at the end of the day, your accident records add up. We need a simple way we could do all this stuff through the stakeholders like the Home Builders' Association in Edmonton or the city of Edmonton or Sherwood Park, you know, all these counties, to simply say that if somebody falls on your job site, that's your problem; make sure that whoever is working on your job site follows the laws. That's my question. You are covering other stuff, but we need to look into that, work-related injuries, accidents.

Thank you.

Mr. Gurske: You pose a very interesting question. It's a very specific question, but I'm going to take it a step back and broaden the lens a little bit, the focus on it. How much do you want to regulate the Alberta workplace environment? I ask that question

very simply because we are more than happy, I think, to assist and educate. That is part of our core mandate. But there's a carrot-and-stick type scenario here. If you want to regulate it, we're more than happy to assist and provide the information and the learning processes to make the regulation effective to reduce the total number of injuries that happen in the workplace because, of course, it will bring down that \$2.4 billion number, which is very, very high, I think you would agree. We can work with them. We'd definitely love to reach out to them. Again, is it part of our core mandate right now? Not per se, and we have to look at that, too. The more work we do, there's also a funding increase that we would have to look for to cover costs. How much do you want to regulate the workplace?

Mr. Sandhu: Well, you know, if somebody died on a construction site or on the road, it's the same thing; it's a death. At the end of the day it's a death. If we need to regulate it, we need to regulate it. You know, if we can educate. Some people don't know how it's going to relate, like a painter jumping on a ladder that's 16 foot high and falls, and then a death happens on the job site. So awareness, prevention, I think. We have to take one step further toward prevention. If we can add some safety. Somebody pulling permits: you know, go from the home builder, I would say. Then the person can look after their job sites or whatever. If my construction company is building a house, I should have a responsibility in that area so nobody gets hurt and nobody dies on the job site.

Mr. Gurske: I think, first and foremost, we're happy with your assistance and would ask for your assistance and Minister Denis's department, because that's where building codes live, to help and assist with advising on policy and legislation for that.

Mr. Sandhu: Sure.

Mr. Gurske: We're happy to do that. But we need your help, too, for you to talk to your fellow members.

Mr. Sandhu: Sure. No problem. When it comes to public safety and service, I'll be helping you. No problem there.

Mr. Gurske: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Kang, followed by Mr. Boutilier.

Mr. Kang: Good morning, everyone. Sorry for being late. I had a 9:30 start time in my calendar. I don't know how that happened. I apologize for that.

I was going to ask questions on agriculture-related deaths, but I think that has been covered somewhat.

I'm looking at a table here, where it says, "Suicides accounted for 29 per cent of injury deaths with an average of 424 deaths each year." Then it goes on to further say, "Suicides were the leading cause of injury death for Albertans [between] 25 to 69 years of age." Then comes motor vehicles. There are three of them kind of lumped together. Is there some kind of record being kept for those people committing suicide? You know, what are the reasons? Is it mental health issues or family violence or drug abuse? Is there any kind of data kept for those people who are committing suicide?

Ms Belton: The data that we have access to does not provide a very good case history of the issues around suicide. What we do know from the literature, and this is research literature, is that most of the cases of suicide are multifactorial. There are a lot of things happen-

ing in that individual's life that are leading them to make that decision. It's not just one thing. They could have a mental health issue, but they could also be living in poverty or have an addictions problem or, you know, be living in a violent relationship. It's not just one thing. It's usually a multitude of factors.

10:00

Mr. Kang: My reason for asking for that data was, you know, so you could work with that data so that we could try to solve this problem. This 29 per cent, I think, is pretty high. If you could gather that data so we could work with the data, maybe we could make some difference here. I don't know how you're going to do it, but if you could do that, that would be helpful. Somebody committing suicide at 25 years is young, and that's sad. I think we should be doing more to prevent those suicides.

Motor vehicle-related deaths, you know, were the leading cause of injury death for residents one to 24 years of age. So that's younger people mostly that fall in that category?

Ms Belton: Yes.

Mr. Kang: Sure, we've been educating them. The Minister of Transportation always talks about common sense. Common sense we cannot regulate; we cannot have laws for common sense. What is being done in order to educate these youth? We have been doing a lot. I know that. But if it hasn't been working, then what kind of changes are we making to educate those people so there's a lot less injury and death with the youth?

Ms Belton: One of the programs that ACICR has been involved with over the last 10 years is the Alberta occupant restraint program. Through that program we've seen an increase in seat belt wearing rates in the province from 69 per cent to 89 per cent in terms of wearing rates of all Albertans, including the high-risk population of the 18 to 24 age group.

One of the things that would help us achieve the result, you know, to get to 95 per cent, would be if the province introduced demerit legislation for not wearing a seat belt. A seat belt is the single most effective way to prevent injuries from a motor vehicle collision. We know that. Science has proven that over and over again. If we could just get people to buckle up, that would keep them in that engineered life space, and when they had a collision, their chances of surviving are 200 per cent as opposed to not being belted in. I think, you know, if the government would pass legislation for demerits and add demerit points so when you receive the seat belt ticket of \$127, you're also receiving a demerit point or two or three. It's been done in other jurisdictions across Canada, and it has shown to be quite effective.

Mr. Kang: So you need the heavy hand of the law. At the same time you need education. Both.

Ms Belton: Yes. They work best together.

Mr. Kang: They work best together. Okay.

Mr. Gurske: It's the perfect example of the carrot and the stick. If you do not wear your seat belt and you're in that target audience and you go out and you continuously are reckless in your driving patterns and driving activities on the road, not only do you endanger yourself; you endanger others around you. At some point there has to be a stick involved. You know, people have to understand that.

We understand, again, we can't legislate everything, but this is a

place where we can actually make a difference. We can get to the last 10 per cent. They're the ones who are the most high risk, often associated with injuries. They're the ones who are being careless, quite frankly. We need to look at something like that to get there because not only, as Kathy said, will they stay in the engineered safety environment of the vehicle that they are in by wearing their seat belts, they also then, quite frankly, will reduce the risk to others around them. If they don't wear their seat belt repeatedly and they're repeatedly caught with tickets, you have an action, and you have a reaction. If I have too many speeding tickets, I lose my licence.

Mrs. Forsyth: Chair, I wonder if you can add me to your speaking list.

Mr. Kang: I fully agree with you because it ends up not only somebody losing their life or injuring other people; it ends up costing billions every year in insurance costs, health care costs. I think we should be looking at every possible way we can avoid an accident.

Mr. Gurske: In meeting with your fellow members, we have made that recommendation to several of them and encouraged them to adopt the same viewpoint.

Mr. Kang: I'm not talking about, you know, road safety only. I'm talking about the safety on the farm. I'm talking about, you know, ATVs. We should have a blanket approach for anywhere injuries occur.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. In order to move along, hopefully we'll shorten up our questions and our answers, please.

Mr. Boutilier is not here, so we'll move to Ms Notley, followed by Mr. MacDonald.

Ms Notley: Thank you.

Mrs. Forsyth: Chair, sorry. If you could add me.

The Chair: Yes, I've got you, Mrs. Forsyth.

Ms Notley: I just wanted to I suppose follow up on the line of questioning that Mr. MacDonald had before with respect to the agricultural injuries and the trend. I might have missed this when you were talking, and I apologize if I did. Have you guys had a chance to look at the changing nature of agricultural operations – this starts in, I guess, 1990, so that's 17 years – and the degree to which there has been a change from, you know, the small farm, the owner-operator, versus the more corporate model?

Of course, the reason is that – it probably comes as no surprise – I have a strong feeling that when it comes to workplace injuries, a lot of the issue comes down to who controls the culture and the setting within which you live. Attitudes of workers are really only one small part of the puzzle if they work in a culture that demands, you know, a certain process be followed. You can tell people to work safe all you want, but if you don't put the culture and the rules and the procedures and the education and the enforcement in place, you can have all the attitude you want. Of course, that is particularly relevant, it seems to me, if you're comparing when I'm my own boss and I'm making the decision about whether I'm going to work safe or when someone else is my boss and they're making the decision about whether I'm going to be allowed to work safe. That, of

course, is where the whole issue of regulation might have a role to play. You probably know that's our opinion on that.

Anyway, going with that, do you have any theories about whether that's a valid analysis, or do you have any information about where those injuries are occurring within the agricultural industry? Is that what you're seeing, or is there something else going on there?

Ms Belton: We haven't looked specifically at the size of the agricultural production as of yet. I can tell you that most injuries are run-overs or rollovers, but we haven't really looked at the setting in which they occur yet.

Ms Notley: Will you be doing that?

Ms Belton: I believe that that's on the agenda for not this year but next year. The Canadian Agricultural Safety Association will be looking at that, and the Canadian agricultural injury reporting program, which is the data piece, will be looking at that then, but we could look at it earlier if that's your wish.

Ms Notley: Well, it's certainly something that I would recommend because I think it's a significant piece to the picture, particularly given the absence of regulation in that setting.

Ms Belton: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. MacDonald, followed by Mrs. Forsyth.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have questions regarding Alberta's all-terrain vehicle program. You mentioned that earlier. In Canada, according to your statistics, children and adolescents account for 25 per cent of deaths due to ATVs; in Alberta they account for 38 per cent. Could you briefly explain how we could reduce that 38 per cent in this province? If you had a wish list, what would you like to see done?

Ms Belton: I would like to see helmet legislation passed for all-terrain vehicles, including not just helmets but proper gear in terms of eye protection, gloves. Just the proper gear will provide a minimum of protection for our children on ATVs.

10:10

I would also like to have recommended strongly an education and training program for children. Right now it is recommended, and helmets are recommended, but adults who are parents aren't getting that message. I think that the ATV working group has gone a long way in ensuring that parents are getting consistent messages across the province, and those messages are: buy a helmet, get your son and daughter trained, and put them on a proper-size ATV. ATVs are not like shoes. You don't buy it one size bigger for the child, and they'll grow into it. It should fit the child.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you.

Now, I have another couple of questions. In the documents you provided to us, you have a photograph of a young person snowboarding, and they have a helmet and goggles and gloves on. Will we see in my lifetime the mandatory requirement for helmets for both snowboarders and skiers at our resorts? Do you think that's a good or a bad idea?

Ms Belton: I think it's a wonderful idea. ACICR was part of the Vancouver charter, which declared that there should be helmets on

ski hills, that was signed at the Vancouver Olympics. We are making some progress in the province in that area, and several ski hills recommend helmets for children and youth. I think it might be like bicycle legislation, where we go under 18, and over 18 you're an adult and you can make your own decisions. But I think that we're making some movement in that area.

Mr. MacDonald: In the injury deaths that you provided to us – and Mr. Kang questioned earlier on that information – suicides were the leading cause of injury deaths for Albertans 25 to 69 years of age. How do we compare with other Canadian jurisdictions?

Ms Belton: Suicide is number one or two in most provinces across the country. Quebec also has a big suicide issue. The only place where suicide is not one of the top issues is in the Maritimes. Again, it's multifactorial. It's that cultural piece. I think that Albertans tend to be rugged and individualistic, and we don't like to ask for help. I think in certain portions of our culture across Canada where there are more help-seeking behaviours, we might see a lesser suicide rate.

Mr. MacDonald: We're not going to discuss our implementation of the mental health plan at this time.

Ms Belton: No.

Mr. MacDonald: I have one more question, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to get back on the list if you don't mind. My next question would be that I think it's two years, but it possibly could be three years, since the province of Quebec mandated that snow tires – four snow tires – be on each and every vehicle between the months of December through to April, I believe. I see your data on motor vehicle collisions and deaths and hospital admissions and emergency department visits. Are you following the development or the reduction, if there is any, in the number of accidents or collisions in Quebec in the winter months? If you are, could I please have that information from you?

Ms Belton: We are following that, but we don't have any data yet. It should be coming out soon, hopefully. Keep your fingers crossed, and I'll send it to you as soon as I get anything.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. I'm quite interested in that. I see here it's voluntary, but at each stop light you'll see in the winter lots of motorists with winter rims and snow tires.

Ms Belton: But you also see a high proportion of all-seasons out there, too. You know, again, it comes down again to, I think, that snow tires are a wonderful idea, and I would like to see them on every vehicle, but we don't have a culture that will voluntarily do that. It gets down to how much regulation the government wants to introduce.

Mr. MacDonald: It's going to be interesting to see if it reduces collisions and, hopefully, reduces insurance premiums as well.

Ms Belton: Yes.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next on the list is Mrs. Forsyth. Mr. MacDonald has requested to be on again. We've gone over our time now. I don't know if it's the

will of the committee to allow us to extend further time. I can put you on, but you'll have to be brief.

Mr. MacDonald: It's a question, actually, that I'm asking on behalf of Mr. Boutilier, who had to unfortunately leave the room. He asked me to get this question on the record on his behalf.

The Chair: Okay. Well, we'll take Mrs. Forsyth's question now. Then we'll come back to Mr. MacDonald briefly.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to thank Kathy and her group for her presentation. I'm sorry we can't be face to face, but telephone conferencing is a wonderful invention.

I just wanted to ask – and I haven't heard everything. People keep fading in and out because they're not close to the mikes, so if you can, Mr. Chair, ensure people have their lips as close to the mikes as they can. Sometimes they're very clear; other times they're not.

I want to ask Kathy what research they've done on cellphones, especially now that the government has tabled Bill 16 late in the spring Legislature. What have you found out in regard to cellphones when driving and other distractions with drivers?

Ms Belton: I would encourage all committee members to look on ACICR's website. We do have a position paper on cellphone driving. Our position is clear that cellphones and driving don't mix. We know from the evidence going forward that it's a bad idea to talk even on a hands-free phone while driving. That's quite clear from the research going forward.

My comments on Bill 16 are that I think it's a wonderful piece of legislation. I think it deals with more than cellphones. I don't think that cellphones are the be-all and end-all issue when it comes to distracted driving. I think that there's a wide range of distractions that we have in our vehicles. You know, from navigation systems to a six-player CD, everything in that vehicle is aimed at either making you comfortable or distracting you from the task of driving. If we can do something to limit those distractions, I think that will go a long way to enhancing road safety.

Mrs. Forsyth: I just wanted to ask you a question. I'll get one of our researchers to check on your site. Where did you get your research from on cellphones, et cetera?

Ms Belton: A lot of it came from peer-reviewed journals and reports from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration from the U.S.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. Thank you.
That's it, Mr. Chair. Thanks.

Ms Belton: You're welcome.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
We'll go back to Mr. MacDonald very briefly.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you. On behalf of Mr. Boutilier, he has a three-year-old son who is diligent in fastening his seat belt in his car seat as his parents transport him around. Mr. Boutilier was curious about school buses, the yellow and black traditional school bus, and the absence of seat belts in school buses and how you feel about that and if you have any opinions on what should be done.

Ms Belton: The issue of seat belts on school buses is an issue that raises its head about every September, but I think that right now,

from the research, school buses are engineered to package the kids as long as they stay in their seats. The issue about putting seat belts on school buses is that they need an adult to adjust them. Each and every time that child goes into the seat belt, you need to make sure that the strap is appropriately across the sternum and that the lap portion is around the hips as opposed to the belly, or else it will cause injury. So do I think that putting seat belts on school buses is a good idea? Not at this time.

Mr. MacDonald: Thank you very much.

Ms Belton: You're welcome.

Mr Gurske: I would like to add to that, though, that I think it's appropriate to talk about booster seats as well for smaller children in vehicles. I think that's something that we'd like to also bring forth and put on the committee's radar because, again, children are priceless. We can't put a price on them, and booster seat legislation would be a great asset on the injury reduction point.

Kathy, do you have some additional comments?

10:20

Ms Belton: Yeah. Booster seats are for those children between the age of four and 80 pounds, that don't fit in a traditional seat belt yet because they're too small. They need to be raised up so that the seat belt fits them, you know, more perfectly, so it fits across the sternum and the hips as opposed to other parts of the chest and the belly.

The Chair: Thank you.

I believe this concludes the time we scheduled for this item of business. I'd like to thank you very much for your presentation today. We appreciate the time you spent with us and thank you.

Ms Belton: Thank you very much.

Mr. Gurske: Thank you. We appreciate the time as well, and we encourage any questions individual members might have. Please contact us. We're more than happy to provide information, data, and be a policy resource as well. We thank you for the time to be here today.

The Chair: Would everybody like a five-minute break, or should we just keep going? Okay. We'll keep going. Thank you.

Next item on the agenda is the review of financial disclosure for leadership contestants. The cross-jurisdictional comparison was distributed with a briefing document for this meeting. Ms LeBlanc is available to review the document and respond to any questions. Anybody have any questions for her?

Mr. MacDonald: I would just like to thank you for this detailed report. It's really good, and I appreciate it. Good research.

Ms LeBlanc: Thank you.

Mr. Rogers: Do we need a motion to receive that for information, Mr. Chairman? I mean, it's certainly very good information. I don't know if that's required, but I didn't expect that we would have an exhaustive discussion on that today.

The Chair: No, that's not required. Thank you very much.

Mr. Rogers: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. MacDonald: I have a question regarding this report. Will this report be put on our website and made publicly available to interested readers if there are any? We had this issue around Public Accounts. Some of the information that was presented to the committee was sparking interest among various parties. We put it on the website so it would be available to them if they are interested. I would suggest we do the same with this.

The Chair: Yes. I think we can make that available on the website.

Mr. Rogers: The reference material for the committee should be as public as for anybody here.

The Chair: Okay. The next item, 6(b), submissions, written submissions summary. I believe the same thing: Ms LeBlanc is here. You could review the document and respond to any questions. Would you like to go through it and review it? Everybody has got it. I don't know.

Ms Calahasen: Just a little summary, maybe, Mr. Chair.

Mrs. Forsyth: I think, Mr. Chair, that the committee has done a good job, and we can all read.

Ms Calahasen: She did such a good job. I really am impressed with that research. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I guess that unless somebody has specific questions, we'll move on. Everybody can read.

Next is handling of submissions. The committee has received several written submissions from interested stakeholders. A few of these submissions were received after the May 21 deadline. Is it the will of the committee that these submissions be included in the review? I probably should have a motion to allow these to be included in the review.

Mrs. Forsyth: I'll move that, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Forsyth. Any discussion on that motion? If not, all in favour?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Motion is carried.

At this point, copies of the submissions have been made available to all members. It has become common practice for submissions of this nature to also be made accessible to the public through our website. Does anyone have any concerns about having these submissions posted?

Seeing none, the next step is oral presentations. Several stakeholders who contributed written submissions for review have indicated they would be willing to make additional presentations to the committee if requested. Is the committee interested in inviting oral presentations, or do we have the information we need from the written submissions?

Mr. Rogers: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think that the opportunity should be offered for the presidents of the registered political parties in Alberta or a designate to make oral presentations if they so desire. I might as well also add that I believe that this issue is germane to the registered political parties, and I as one member am not particularly interested in presentations from groups that really are not specific to a registered political party in Alberta.

The Chair: Okay. Is that a motion?

Mr. Rogers: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I would move – and I guess then we can have some discussion on it – that the presidents or a designate of all registered provincial political parties in Alberta be offered or invited to make oral presentations to this committee at some future date.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any discussion on that? Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Before we have a discussion on Mr. Rogers' motion, could you explain if the committee had planned to advertise publicly to interested parties who may wish to make an oral presentation before us at some time on this matter?

The Chair: No. At our last meeting we weren't going with public advertising. We invited guests. We had a list. Every member was asked to send in who they would like to give written submissions, and then they were all sent a request for written submissions. Every member of the committee was asked to submit names who they'd like to see send in written submissions, but we didn't publicly advertise.

Mr. MacDonald: I think we should publicly advertise.

The Chair: Well, we discussed that at the last meeting. We have a motion on the floor we're discussing now, and you can make a motion later if you like.

Does anybody have comments on the motion? Ms Notley.

Ms Notley: Yes. Well, as you know, I'm not a member of this committee, and I wasn't here at the last meeting, nor did I participate in the discussion about how it was advertised. I think, actually, the whole issue of how it was advertised becomes germane to this motion because originally I was going to say: well, okay, it appears as though, you know, the only people that were interested were those who made submissions. Those who made submissions align up partially with this motion in that those are the folks who've asked to make an oral presentation.

This is the first committee I've ever observed not publicly advertise that they're reviewing something like this. I am surprised to see that the public hasn't actually been advised of this, so I'm a little concerned, then, about the limiting nature of the motion because I'm just not sure that everybody has been given the opportunity to participate in this discussion. I do think it's a matter of public interest, and it goes well beyond the issue of interests of political parties and applies very clearly to anybody who's got an interest in transparent democracy in the province. So I am concerned about that.

I'm not a voting member, but I would certainly ask this committee to reconsider this whole issue of how widely you are telling Albertans that the committee is in the process of reviewing this issue.

The Chair: Okay. We'll take that and consider it, but we did have that discussion at this meeting before.

Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I apologize, too, if I wasn't part of that discussion, but in the written submissions that we have before us today we have submission 5, from the office of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, Canada. We have submission 6,

which is from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. There are various other written submissions, mostly from political parties. Some talk about restricting and limiting the amounts that can be donated during leadership conventions of whatever respective party we're talking about. The Alberta Party wants to limit donations from corporations and trade unions, as do other parties, from what I can read quickly here.

10:30

To limit or restrict a corporation's or a trade union's ability to make an oral presentation, I think, doesn't serve this committee very well. I really think we've got to give other groups an opportunity. I can only look at the financial disclosures as we had them from the Conservative leadership race in 2006. There were a lot of big corporate donations there. Someone like AltaLink may have an interest in coming and presenting to the committee.

The Chair: Would anybody else like to discuss the motion?

Mr. Cao: I would focus on the motion because the matter of the public advertisement was discussed at our last meeting already. The committee has decided that through this process we will invite people who have an interest in it. Each member had the freedom to provide a list, so that's been dealt with. I don't think we just go back to old matters and discuss again. I propose that we just focus on the motion on the table here by our hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont-Devon. I support the motion for that issue, that we would invite the political parties to do a presentation to the committee. That is the motion on the table, so I vote for it.

The Chair: Any other for further discussion on the motion?

Ms Notley: I can't vote, but I guess, if I didn't make it clear before, my concern about this motion is that it is far too limiting and that there are people with a significant interest and groups with a significant interest in this issue who have not been invited or notified. This motion, if you pass it, just carries on this, I would suggest, error or misstep in terms of ensuring that there is a proper conversation with Albertans about this important issue.

The Chair: Mr. MacDonald.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. I regret, Mr. Chairman, the meeting on April 13 I could not attend. I was at the Edmonton public school board's meeting which, unfortunately, closed three public schools in my constituency. I regret my absence, but I really think we should revisit this issue, please.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Xiao.

Mr. Xiao: Yeah. I'd just like to make a comment. Because we're talking about the leadership contestants, you know, and their financial disclosure, this has nothing to do with other organizations. This, to me, has something to do with the political organizations or entities. It's not, say, whoever wants to donate the money. I don't care whether it's a charity organization, a community organization, labour organization. It doesn't matter. That's my personal view. I think this has everything to do with the political parties and nothing to do with some other, nonpolitical entities. That's my personal view.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Xiao.

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Chair, if I may. It's Heather Forsyth.

The Chair: Yes. I can put you on the list, Heather. I've got Mr. Kang and Mr. MacDonald, and then I'll put you on the list.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thanks.

Mr. Kang: I'm sorry I missed that April 13 meeting, too, because I was out of the country. I don't see anything wrong, you know, in opening it up to whoever wants to come up here before the committee. I have no problems with that. There's a big hue and cry out there even in England and Nova Scotia, you know, about transparency. As politicians we cannot limit it to the political parties only. Let's open it up, you know, to whoever wants to come. We are a democratic society. Let whoever wants to speak their mind come and speak their mind and get it done. Let's not limit it to the political parties only because the people who are contributing to the political parties are in part responsible, too, for all the decisions made by the political parties. The funding coming to the political parties affects our life in so many ways. I don't think we should be just limiting it to the political parties only.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Kang.

Next Mr. MacDonald, followed by Mrs. Forsyth.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through the chair to Mr. Xiao, who do you think funds leadership races for any party? Is it charitable organizations or large corporations mostly?

Mr. Xiao: You know, I don't know. I've never run for leadership.

The Chair: Excuse me, Mr. Xiao. That's not how this committee works. It has to be through the chair.

Mr. Xiao: Through the chair can I answer the question?

The Chair: Okay. On this point, but you have to be on the list if you're going to add anything.

Mr. Xiao: Okay. Sure.

The Chair: Next Mrs. Forsyth, followed by Mr. Xiao.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going back to the April 13 Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services. It was moved by Dr. Brown that staff prepare a stakeholder list with input from committee members and that the chair be authorized to approve the final list of stakeholders prior to an invitation being sent to identified stakeholders advising them of the review initiated by the Standing Committee on Public Safety and Services. After that meeting, Mr. Chair, I discussed with my staff and my other colleagues, my other MLAs, who they thought we should send in to you as the chair to invite submissions from. At that particular time we did spend a lot of time in discussion on who we thought should participate, who we thought should be invited, what stakeholders we thought would want to provide submissions, et cetera.

I guess what I'm saying at this point, Mr. Chair: we had the opportunity at that particular time to provide you a list of stakeholders. Now I'm hearing from some of my colleagues, that I have a great deal of respect for, that we're going to all of a sudden open it up to oral presentations. That could be a whole bunch of people. We could invite the Canadian taxpayers' association. We could invite the independent business. I think one of the members referred

to AltaLink. We had that opportunity. We could have put that on the list. I'm struggling with why we're going back instead of moving forward.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Forsyth.

Next on the list is Mr. Xiao, followed by Ms Notley.

Mr. Xiao: Yeah. Through you, Mr. Chair, to answer my hon. colleague Hugh MacDonald's question, I don't know. I've never run for leadership yet. I might run someday, but when I run, I'll make sure everybody knows that I will publish all the donors' names. Then they have to make a decision whether they want to donate to my campaign or not. That's their decision, but I want everybody to know. My point is that this is an issue related to political parties. We cannot legislate the donors, right? We want to legislate the political parties. What you are going to do with your own money is your decision.

If we open it up to everybody, I bet you we won't have a life. We will stay here forever. Everybody would like to do a presentation. Some people want to say: hey; I don't have a problem putting my name on the list. Some people say: no, no, no; I don't want you to do that. It's up to the political parties whether they want to disclose the donors list or not. That's their business. If they publicize the names of the donors that don't want their names to be there, then next time they won't donate. It has nothing to do with us as a Legislature. We are here to legislate the activities of political parties, not the businesses, not the individuals.

That's my answer – okay? – through the chair. Thank you.

10:40

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Xiao.

Ms Notley: Well, I've got about three points. First of all, in terms of the whole issue of having the opportunity, as I am, as I've said, not a member of this committee, I want to make it very clear that I didn't have the opportunity. I was not invited to give a stakeholder list. I was not invited into that discussion except for, you know, if I happened to come by even though I'm not on this committee, which I'm doing now. So as the first part of it goes, I didn't have the opportunity.

Also, everybody who was not on one of these members' stakeholder lists did not have the opportunity. I've heard mention of the business, Taxpayers Federation, and AltaLink and corporations and stuff. I haven't heard anyone suggest – were the unions on anybody's stakeholder list? I don't know. I wasn't asked to give any names, so I have no idea whether they were on the stakeholder list. Ultimately, the opportunity rests on whether a broad invitation is issued, and in this case a broad invitation very clearly was not issued. As I've said, I've only been here for two years, but this is the first time I've been on a committee that's reviewed something like this that has not done as a matter of course a public notice. I find it quite interesting that in this particular case there was no public notice.

On the issue of whether or not this impacts only political parties, let me say this: if you were to follow that line of reasoning to its natural conclusion, we would then argue that the people of Alberta have no interest in the Election Act at all, that it's all about how parties police themselves, it's all about how we choose to collect our money and spend our money and do this and do that. But, strangely, people who are kind of interested in democracy have a pattern of putting together election acts which do actually regulate how political parties conduct themselves.

I was here in 2006, I believe it was, when the last leader of the

governing party was selected. I remember members of the government going out, selling memberships to people, saying: this is your opportunity to pick your Premier because we're going to be government forever, and participating in our leadership race is the opportunity to pick our Premier. So to suggest that that somehow has no implications for the general public is naive at best and much worse at worst.

I really believe that this committee is making a fundamental error in not reconsidering this issue.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. MacDonald next.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much. The last time we had a leadership race, the Alberta Liberal Party had full disclosure of donations to the respective candidates, and it worked fine. It was on the Internet, and if people wanted to look, they could.

When I recall what was said whenever the Wildrose Alliance Party had their latest leadership race, the eventual winner, Danielle Smith, who did not disclose her financial donors, suggested publicly that the donors, many of the corporations, would feel intimidated if that list had been made public and that there may be reprisals from the governing party if the governing party knew that they were giving a few dollars to another party. So I think we should allow corporations for that reason and that reason alone an invitation to appear before this committee. How do they feel about the present situation? Because it's frightening to think that a corporation may quietly give money to a party providing the governing party doesn't find out. I think we should give those corporations an opportunity to attend, and if they're interested, we will see who shows up.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Cao: At the time of the meeting in the committee I was here, and we discussed at length exactly what our two hon. members brought up: one is opening it up to the public, and the other one is opening it up to the donor side and so on. We discussed that. We did. So it's not new here, that we haven't heard of this point. We had made a decision at that time through the committee that we go on and solicit the list.

It's open, so people submit. As far as I understand, the committee is on the Internet. The chair of the committee has been accessible to anybody in Alberta here. Even for the submissions, there are some deadlines that you submit, but people still can send in any time now to the chair, and then the chair can bring to the committee whether we consider that or not. On that point about consultation I would suggest to the two hon. members feeling that it's not wide open that now they can go and advertise themselves that: hey, send in to the committee through the chair. So I don't think that's a point to debate here.

The point right now at the table is to invite the political parties to come and do an oral presentation. I think I'd like to focus on that, and then the other matter we can talk about after.

The Chair: Thank you.
Next Mr. Rogers.

Mr. Rogers: Well, thanks, Mr. Chairman. We seem to be going round and round, and at some point we're going to have to call the question. This matter was debated at length at the previous meeting. A number of members have had their say today a few times, and I don't imagine that we're all going to come to a consensus on this. I think we should have a vote on the motion at hand and go forward.

Where this ends up, we're not all going to agree. I just think it's time we call the question.

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Chair, what's the motion? What is the motion that you've got at the table?

Mr. Rogers: Maybe if the clerk could read the motion back, Mr. Chairman.

Ms Rempel: Just to summarize it slightly, I believe it is that the presidents or other designates of all registered provincial political parties be invited to come and make a presentation to the committee on the matter at hand.

The Chair: Thank you.
Any further discussion?

Ms Calahasen: Call the question.

The Chair: Okay. All in favour? Opposed?

Mr. MacDonald: For the record, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: One opposed for the record. And Mr. Kang opposed. The motion is carried. Thank you.

The next item on the agenda is 6(c). [interjections] Hold it. Order in the meeting, please. Excuse me. You don't have the floor. We're in a meeting.

So any additional research required to complete the review?

Ms Calahasen: Mr. Chair, I think the information that's been provided by our researchers has been exemplary, so I think we've got all the information. I believe that there will be questions once we get anybody who will come and sit with us on the invite. I believe we'll have enough questions at that point. Very good.

The Chair: Thank you.
Is there any other business that the committee wishes to raise?

Ms Notley: I just have a question. What is the process going forward in terms of the meetings: when they're going to be held, when we're going to be writing the report. I just remember in my last committee meeting the chair came with an exceptionally tight timeline so that we were sure that we had a report ready to send in to the Legislature in the fall. Maybe you guys have discussed this previously. Is that the plan here?

The Chair: Well, the next item on the agenda is the next meeting, but the review must be completed by October 13. You know, we'll take oral presentations at our next meeting, which we'll decide next on the agenda. Then the committee will decide at that time what meetings need to follow. We may be able to compile a report by the chair and the vice-chair, and then we may not have to have another meeting. We can send the report around to committee members, and if they all agree, then we have to make the presentation by October 13.

So we'll have a meeting – and I guess that's our next item – roughly in the middle of July, give them a month's time or so to prepare their oral presentations. We'll have another meeting at that time and decide from there. You know, that may be the only meeting we need if everybody agrees – we can do the written report and send it through e-mail – but we'll decide that at the time.

10:50

Ms Notley: Thanks for that information.

Mr. Johnson: If we could, maybe we could discuss the date for the next meeting.

The Chair: Yeah. That's the next item on the agenda.

Mr. Johnson: Okay. I've got a suggestion there.

The Chair: Okay. When we get to that.
Any other business?
If not, the next item is the date of the next meeting.

Mr. Johnson: Well, I think that if we're going to hit the October timeline, we need to get this meeting, as you said, by the middle of July, but we've got several things, including PNWER and Stampede, right in the middle of July. I might suggest that a month is probably enough time to give people notice and get them in here. Maybe sometime around July 8 would be a good suggestion for our next meeting.

The Chair: I think that makes it easier for the committee clerk rather than trying to phone everybody through the summer. It's always hard to book meetings in the summer, so if July 8 is acceptable to everybody. I know we can never make everybody happy, but does anybody have concerns with July 8?

Mr. Johnson: And we can teleconference, right?

The Chair: We can teleconference, or you have the opportunity to have somebody sit on your behalf. Mr. Kang, can you have somebody substitute for you? Is everybody else okay?

Mrs. Forsyth: Mr. Chair, can I just get a clarification on the July 8 meeting?

The Chair: Yes.

Mrs. Forsyth: That's not to have the registered political parties appear before us on July 8, is it?

The Chair: That's right. That's exactly what it's for, the oral presentations. We do have another presentation we have to do this summer or over the next while from the Solicitor General's office. We may take a presentation at that time from other interested groups, but the main reason will be the oral presentations from political parties, as the motion stated.

Mrs. Forsyth: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: You know, I realize we'll never have a day that makes everybody happy, but who's okay with July 8?

Mr. MacDonald: Is that here?

The Chair: Yes. That'll be here in this room because we need it to be on *Hansard*.

Mr. Rogers: Plus teleconference.

The Chair: Yeah. You can teleconference if you like – we've already had that motion now – or send an alternative representative.
So it looks like July 8 will be our next meeting. Thank you very much.

Mr. MacDonald: Nine o'clock?

The Chair: Nine o'clock here, yep. Same time, same place.
With that, I'll adjourn the meeting. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 10:53 a.m.]

