

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, May 30, 2001**

**1:30 p.m.**

Date: 01/05/30

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: **Prayers**

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. Dear God, author of all wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, we thank You for hearing our prayers. We thank You for Your abundant blessings to our province and ourselves. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: **Introduction of Visitors**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MR. NORRIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly His Excellency Svend Nielsen, ambassador for Denmark. This is the ambassador's first official visit to Alberta, and we're pleased to welcome him. He and I shared a delightful lunch together over at Government House. Accompanying him is Mr. Ole Jorgensen, honorary consul general of Denmark stationed here in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta and Denmark have much in common. We both have northern climates, which is obvious. We both have strong oil and gas and agricultural and food industries, and we both have now eliminated our deficits and are now posting surpluses. Over 46,000 Albertans are of Danish descent, and our province is proud to be home to the prairies' oldest Danish settlement, at Dickson, Alberta, first established in 1903. The beautiful Danish/Canadian natural museum and gardens are located there.

This visit is an excellent opportunity to discuss ways to build and strengthen the Alberta/Denmark friendship and to explore potential areas of co-operation. I thoroughly enjoyed our time together. They're wonderful people, and I would ask that they rise in the gallery and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly His Worship Mayor Issam Halabi. Mayor Halabi is the mayor of the town of Yanta in the Bekaa province in Lebanon. Mr. Halabi is visiting the Yanta community in Edmonton. The Yanta community, as we all know, is made up of about 2,500 people here in the city of Edmonton, and we certainly appreciate their contribution to the social, economic, and political structure of this province and this country. The mayor is also very busy working on a twinning project between his town, the town of Vienta, and the town of Drayton Valley, Alberta, and we wish him every success in his endeavours.

His Worship is accompanied today by two very well-known personalities, Mr. Joe Hak and Mr. Kamal Salame. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. [remarks in Lebanese]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

MR. DUCHARME: Merci, M. le Président. J'aimerais commencer en présentant trois visiteurs importants qui sont ici dans votre galerie. Deux de ces personnes sont des membres de l'exécutif provincial de l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta. Il

s'agit de Mme Suzanne Dalziel, la présidente de l'association, et M. Denis Lord, le vice-président. La troisième personne est Mme Therese Conway, la présidente nouvellement réélue de la Fédération des Aînés Franco-Albertains.

L'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta célèbre sa 75<sup>e</sup> anniversaire cette année. L'association a été fondée ici même à Edmonton, à l'Hotel MacDonald, en 1926 lors d'une réunion de plus de 400 délégués venus de tous les coins de la province. Depuis son établissement l'association a toujours respecté et suivi sa mission, qui était de favoriser le développement de la communauté Francophone sous tous ses aspects.

Le travail de l'association a contribué à la mise sur pied et au soutien de nombreuses institutions importantes qui ont œuvré au bénéfice de la communauté Francophone ainsi que de la population entière de notre province. Parmi ces institutions on peut mentionner *Le Franco*, le journal d'expression française, qui est publié sur une base hebdomadaire depuis sa fondation en 1928; CHFA, la radio de langue française, qui a été fondée en 1949; la Faculté Saint-Jean, la seule institution post-secondaire de langue française à l'ouest de Winnipeg.

De plus, l'association a toujours maintenu un membership imposant qui se chiffre aujourd'hui à plus de 6,000 membres. Aussi, l'association a toujours encouragé le développement d'un réseau de bénévoles d'un bout à l'autre de la province, comprenant 10 régionales, un regroupement jeunesse fort et actif, une fédération des aînés, une fédération de parents, et de nombreuses autres organismes et groupes.

En terminant, j'aimerais féliciter l'Association canadienne-française de l'Alberta pour avoir atteint ce point important dans son histoire et lui souhaiter une longue vie remplie de succès.

[Translation] I would like to begin by introducing three important persons that are seated in the gallery. Two are executive members of the French Canadian Association of Alberta. They are the president of the association, Mrs. Suzanne Dalziel, and the vice-president, M. Denis Lord. The third person is the newly re-elected president of the Franco-Albertan Seniors Federation, Mrs. Therese Conway. These three persons are my guests today as a follow-up to the special celebration that was held yesterday in the rotunda to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the French Canadian Association of Alberta.

The association was founded at a meeting of over 400 delegates right here in Edmonton at the Hotel MacDonald in 1926. Since its founding the association has been true to its original mission to foster the development of the Alberta Francophone community in all aspects of life. The work of this great association has created a number of important institutions for the benefit of the Francophone community and the population of our entire province. Among those institutions we can mention *Le Franco*, the French language weekly newspaper; CHFA, the French language television network; Faculté Saint-Jean; and many more.

The association has maintained over the years a strong personal membership that presently stands at 6,000 members. Also, it has encouraged the development of a full network of volunteer organizations throughout the province, including 10 regional offices, a strong and vibrant youth organization, a parents' federation, a seniors' federation, and many more organizations and groups.

To conclude, I would like to congratulate the French Canadian Association of Alberta upon reaching this important milestone and extend my best wishes for a long and prosperous future. [as submitted]

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask our visitors, who are accompanied by M. Denis Tardif, the director of the Francophone Secretariat, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**head: Presenting Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to present a petition to the Legislature of Alberta which states:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government of Alberta to include the following question in the forthcoming provincial election: are you in favour of the Alberta Government using your tax dollars to pay for abortions?

Mr. Speaker, 5,115 people signed this petition.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition signed by a number of Albertans, and this is in regard to sour gas flaring, Alberta's shame: toxic, noxious, deadly. They are urging the government to "legislate measures to curb pollution from sour gas stack flaring to protect public health and the environment of Alberta."

Thank you.

**head: Reading and Receiving Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I submitted on Monday be now read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Government to end the Policy permitting hazardous wastes to be transported into Alberta from outside Canada and delivered to Swan Hills Waste Treatment Plant.

**head: Presenting Reports by  
Standing and Special Committees**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Standing Committee on Private Bills has had certain bills under consideration and wishes to report as follows. The committee recommends that the following private bills proceed: Bill Pr. 1, Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer Amendment Act, 2001; Bill Pr. 2, Burns Memorial Trust Act; and Bill Pr. 4, Western Union Insurance Company Amendment Act, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, the committee recommends that the following proceed with an amendment: Bill Pr. 3, The Bank of Nova Scotia Trust Company and National Trust Company Act. As part of this report I will be tabling five copies of the amendment proposed for this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I request the concurrence of the Assembly in these recommendations. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Would all hon. members in favour of the report please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. Carried.

**head: Introduction of Bills**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

**Bill 211  
Citizens' Initiative Act**

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 211, being the Citizens' Initiative Act.

The purpose of Bill 211 is to allow eligible voters in Alberta an avenue by which to propose and vote on a request for legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 211 read a first time]

1:40

**head: Tabling Returns and Reports**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to table five copies of answers to questions raised during Committee of Supply with respect to the estimates of the Department of Justice and Attorney General raised by the Member for Edmonton-Centre and the Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table today with the Assembly responses to questions raised during main estimates for Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development, as well as those for the lottery fund pertaining to my portfolio. They are to the MLA for Edmonton-Highlands, to the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition, to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, and to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie. I understand they've received those in their offices.

I would also like to table the annual report of the Alberta Grain Commission for 2000-2001.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege today to provide the correct copies for five tablings: in the first instance and on behalf of the current chair, Calgary-Shaw, the Social Care Facilities Review Committee annual report for the period April 1, '99, to March 31, 2000, with a tribute from the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall; the response to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods' question dated April 25, 2001; the Committee of Supply responses for Children's Services; the response to Children's Advocate annual report; and the Child and Family Services Authorities Act review.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environment.

DR. TAYLOR: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In the true spirit of openness and democracy I'm pleased to table in response to Written Question 6 from Edmonton-Ellerslie five copies of section 4.2 of the 1996 agreement, as requested in the written question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table two reports in response to an oral question on May 10 from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry. One was prepared by the department, and the second one is a pilot investigation of a fatigue management program for the commercial motor vehicle industry, prepared by the Canadian Sleep Institute in Calgary.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is five copies of responses to questions posed

during the Gaming estimates in Committee of Supply on May 7, 2001.

The second is five copies of responses to questions posed in Committee of Supply during Alberta lottery fund estimates regarding the Ministry of Gaming on May 14, 2001.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a report, an interim update received from the hon. Member for Highwood, who is chairing the Persons with Developmental Disabilities Community Governance Act Review Committee.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. MAR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your indulgence I beg leave to have two sets of tablings. The first is the requisite number of copies, being five, of the Alberta Dental Hygienists' Association annual report for the year 2000.

The second one is the requisite number of copies, being five, of the Alberta College of Social Workers annual report for the year 2000.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

MR. DUCHARME: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table a document entitled Let's Talk Dialogue. It is the report of the Dialogue Task Force, set up by the Federation of the Francophone and Acadian Communities of Canada. The report was published in February 2001 in a French/English bilingual format. It is of interest for two reasons: one, because our own French Canadian Association of Alberta was involved in the process and, secondly, because the National Federation examined the idea of promotion and development of the Francophone and Acadian communities in the context of an exchange and a dialogue with Anglophones, Quebec Francophones, native peoples, and ethnocultural groups.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. Member for Red Deer-North, would you kindly do us the satisfaction of removing your exhibit that's in front of your desk. It seems to me that hon. members from Red Deer have a wonderful fascination with exhibits.

The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Kristine Cassie, the human resources manager of the Lethbridge and District YWCA. She's expressing concerns about the funding formula for Sun Country and the fact that they're facing cutbacks in a lot of their programs that could affect individuals that they provide service to.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Mr. David Budzinski. Mr. Budzinski is concerned about dogs being used to kill coyotes.

The second tabling I have today is an e-mail from Mr. Will Gadd. Mr. Gadd wants the government to consider "not allowing further logging, mineral exploration or other damaging uses of K country."

The third tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the appropriate number of copies of an e-mail from Jeff Perron of Canmore. He is concerned about the exploitation of forests in Kananaskis.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I table the required number of copies of a letter from Mr. David Parker of Edmonton. Mr. Parker is concerned about the lack of regulations for intensive livestock operations.

An additional tabling. I have the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Ms Crilley. Ms Crilley is concerned about the air quality in the Bow Valley corridor.

The last tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a letter from Ms Laurie Farlinger. Ms Farlinger would like to see the government protect the Bighorn wildland area.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. The first is a letter from Ms Leanne Dalderis. Ms Dalderis is concerned about the proposed forest management agreement between the government and Spray Lake Sawmills.

The second tabling today is from Ms Rutland. It's a letter from Ms Kath Rutland of Millarville. Ms Rutland is concerned that "the minister responsible for protecting the environment is proposing to destroy a national Wildlife Area."

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings today. The first is a letter to me from the room 15 class at John A. McDougall school. I met with them around Bill 209, and they have supplied me with their recommendations on that bill.

The second tabling is a letter from Alison Dinwoodie, president of the Stewards of Alberta's Protected Areas Association. She is concerned with the dismantling of the Department of Environment. In particular, her group does not believe that parks and protected places should be under the Minister of Community Development.

My third tabling is a copy of a letter from Dorene Rew of Red Deer. Ms Rew is concerned with the effects of industrial, commercial, and agricultural development on our water supplies.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With great enthusiasm I rise to table two documents. One is a letter from Mr. Dennis Fenske of Sherwood Park. Mr. Fenske is concerned about environmental issues in Beaver county.

The other is the appropriate number of copies of a letter from Bill Weisenburger, who is chairman of the Society of Concerned Citizens of Pine Lake. This group is concerned about how waste and debris are being handled in the Pine Lake area.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to table five copies of a letter from the chairperson of the board of trustees of Northern Gateway public schools addressed to the Minister of Learning. Ms Judy Muir is requesting the minister to reconsider certain sections of Bill 16, which in its present form is opposed by this school division.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

MR. MASON: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I have one tabling today. I'm tabling five copies of a letter addressed to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. This letter is from Ms Darlene Zloklikovits, vice-president, Alberta Injured Workers Society, expressing their strong disappointment with the minister's failure to implement the recommendations of two recent WCB review committees.

Thank you.

1:50

head: **Introduction of Guests**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. DANYLUK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the members of the Assembly I would like to introduce the most important person in our constituency office, and that is my assistant Rhonda LaFrance. Rhonda acquired her BA in sociology at the U of S and also achieved her master's in journalism from Carleton University in Ottawa. Again, it is my honour to work with Rhonda and to introduce you to her. I would ask her to please stand to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

MR. VANDERMEER: Mr. Speaker, it gives me great honour to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly Hilda Schenk. Hilda worked tirelessly on my campaign to see to it that I became a member. I'm also pleased to let you know that she is my constituency office manager, and she is working tirelessly there now. Would Hilda please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Amitabh Arora. Mr. Arora works for the consulate of Canada in Mumbai, India. He assists Canadian companies interested in doing business in India. His responsibilities include oil and gas, diamonds, and the agricultural sector. Mr. Arora brought the largest ever, 70 members, Indian oil and gas delegation to Alberta for the National Petroleum Show and the World petroleum show in June 2000. For his outstanding service the Canadian high commissioner in India awarded him with a certificate of merit for the year 2000-2001.

Currently Mr. Arora is on a unique exchange program between Alberta Economic Development and the consulate of Canada in India. This initiative is being tried for the first time. While in Alberta he is responsible to inform Alberta companies of opportunities in the Indian oil and gas sector and assist them in entering the Indian market.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Arora is seated in your gallery, and I request that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar.

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great privilege for me to introduce today a home schooler group from my constituency. They're called the Drayton Valley and district home educators. The group leaders, who are also the parents and the teachers, are Roxanne Lachance and Anita Basque. They're here today with their children Jesse, Timothy, Jordan, and Adam Lachance as well as Courtney and Kyle Basque. I'd ask them all to stand in the members' gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly Kane Waselenchuk; his parents, Darren and Solitaire Waselenchuk; and his grandmother Joyce Waselenchuk.

Kane is a remarkable and talented 19 year old who has already won seven world titles in racquetball. At 16 he was the youngest player ever chosen to play for Team Canada. At 17 he was the youngest player ever to win the senior national title. He has won the Canadian national championship three times: 1999, 2000, and 2001. Last year Kane was a member of Team Canada when they won gold at the Tournament of Americas and the world championships, a first for Canada. In Vancouver this past weekend Kane became the first player ever to hold both the singles and doubles titles in the Canadian national championships. His doubles partner was Brian Istace of Calgary.

With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I would now ask that the Waselenchuks rise – they are seated in the public gallery – and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you very much.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to make two introductions to you and through you to the members of the Assembly today. We all rely heavily on our constituency office managers, and they're all excellent, I'm sure. Mine is among the very most excellent, and she is in the public gallery. Her name is Jan Baker.

The other person I would like to introduce is a constituent of mine and a STEP student who is doing research with our caucus over the summer. He's a member of the Lemieux clan, a well-known family in Edmonton for their many great achievements.

I would like to ask John and Jan to both rise in the public gallery and receive our warm welcome.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Seniors.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to introduce two people to the Assembly today. The first one is Carol Guenette. She's been my constituency assistant since 1989. That just proves I'm not very hard to get along with. The second individual is Jill Jespersen, who is a student in bible school, and she's planning on going into nursing at the University of Alberta and becoming a missionary. I would like them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce to you and the Assembly Carolyn Laird, a former resident of Fort Saskatchewan, a former page in this Assembly, and also a political science grad from the U of A. Currently she's a staff assistant for the U.S. Senate Republican Policy Committee. I'd ask her to please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Solicitor General.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not to be outdone, I would like to introduce to you and through you two people who are very important and key in my life. Terri Douglas is my Leg. assistant and has been with me since day one. The second person, David Hart, is my STEP student, who is on his first visit to the

Legislature. Both are the best in Alberta, and I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome from the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly somebody that many of you have met in the past. It's always refreshing to see a world champion sports figure, and within this building in the past and in Edmonton today we've had a world champion master weightlifter. I would ask Wendy Rogers, who's won a couple of world championships, to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environment.

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you Amy Zienkiewicz from Cardiff, Wales. Amy is visiting for a three-month period before she starts university to study history and politics. She's sitting in the members' gallery with my trusty and excellent executive assistant. He wrote this. I would ask them both to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud and pleased to introduce to you and every colleague in the Assembly today a very special guest, Mr. Anand Sharma, who is the co-chair of New Democrat Youth of Alberta and presently is a student at the University of Alberta, completing his BA in political science. Anand has shown himself to be a very hardworking and capable organizer, and presently Mr. Sharma is spending most of his spare time this month co-ordinating the New Democrat youth convention to be held June 22 to June 24 at Goldeye in Nordegg, Alberta. He is seated in the public gallery. I would ask Anand to please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a dear friend of mine, Mrs. Lynne McArthur. Lynne worked here in the Legislative Assembly as an assistant for myself and my former colleague from Calgary-Currie, and we're really pleased she's here today because we do miss her. Lynne, I'd ask that you rise – she's seated in the members' gallery – and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

2:00

head: **Ministerial Statements**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

### **John Graham Grenville Richert**

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is with sadness that I inform my colleagues of a terrible accident that occurred last week.

On Friday, May 25, two firefighters for the province lost their lives in a bird-dog plane over Red Earth, Alberta. One of the two people involved in the tragedy was a very well-known and highly respected forest officer. In fact, he was a 35-year veteran of land and forest services. We know that the other person in the plane was

a pilot working for Air Spray Ltd., who was also in the flying business for many years.

These two men worked on the front lines, Mr. Speaker. Being from a northern community, I understand and appreciate the role that these unique professionals play in protecting the people of Alberta, the communities, and the province's resources. I have known many of them personally, and I hold a deep and long-standing respect for the members of these crews.

As a veteran of land and forest services our lost member, John Graham, was well known, well liked, and very highly respected. He was very experienced with bird-dog planes and was in the front lines of fires in and around communities like Fort Vermilion, Grande Prairie, and Robb, Alberta. He probably had more than one opportunity to move from the field to a role that would have certainly afforded him more personal safety. Being a firefighter was more than something he did to make a living. As a long-standing member of land and forest services, there were many who looked up to him. They lost a friend, a family man, a husband, a father, and a grandfather. To say that he will be deeply missed cannot possibly do justice to what his family is dealing with right now.

Our fire-fighting teams involve a rare breed of contract pilots who commit their efforts to suppressing fires in Alberta. This accident also marked the loss of a pilot, a young man in his 37th year. Grenville Richert's colleagues at Air Spray Ltd. are, to say the least, devastated by this accident and have lost a valuable member of their team. His loss is being mourned in his home community in Saskatchewan, where he leaves behind his wife and other family members. A seasoned pilot from an aviation family, it was his second year fighting fires for the province and the people of Alberta.

I had the opportunity to speak with some of the crewmates of these two men on the day after the accident. The people who work with bird-dog planes play a very important role in fighting fires. They lead the communications between the ground and air crews. They take the air tankers over the fire and determine where the extinguishing agents need to be dropped. In this way, they are the eyes and the ears of the operations. Year after year after year they return to the fires, to exhausting work and to long hours away from their loved ones. Year after year they return to the camaraderie of their teammates and to the satisfaction of knowing they are protecting the lives and the livelihoods of fellow Albertans.

This tragic accident resulted in a deep loss felt by all who knew these two men. We must never forget all the men and women who have fought fires in the past and those who are out in the lines right now protecting the lives of Albertans. On behalf of the men and women who work closely with these men, on behalf of the Department of Sustainable Resource Development, on behalf of the Alberta government, and on behalf of all Albertans I extend deepest sympathies and prayers to the families and friends of the two men who lost their lives in the service of fighting fires in Alberta.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is a province of great beauty. From the wide-open plains and rolling foothills to towering mountains and rugged northern forests, there are few places as diverse as Alberta. Canadians recognize and cherish this landscape. We have seen many times the destruction caused by forest fires, and we know that fighting these fires is never easy and never without risk. While fighting fires is about saving forests and property, our firefighters must never have to face unwarranted risk. Protecting the lives of those in the path of fire and of the firefighters must always be a priority. Fighting forest fires takes a strong and

dedicated team. Every member must be committed. Every member must have passion.

There is no doubt in the minds of Albertans that John Graham and Grenville Richert were committed and passionate about their work. John Graham was a long-serving employee of land and forest services. He had fought many fires. He was the veteran that people looked to for advice and guidance. Grenville Richert was a young pilot from a family of fliers. This was the second year he had come to protect Alberta's forests. These men were working for all Albertans to save our forests. They were working to save our natural heritage. When Albertans are outside enjoying the rugged beauty of our province, they should stop for a moment and think about what it takes to protect our forests and our communities residing within those forests.

We join all Albertans in extending our prayers and sympathies to the families, friends, and colleagues of John Graham and Grenville Richert.

### head: Oral Question Period

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

#### Swan Hills Treatment Centre

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Official Opposition has repeatedly made requests for information on the Swan Hills waste treatment centre through freedom of information requests and through this Assembly. The Official Opposition believes that Albertans have a right to know what has happened to almost 500 million tax dollars. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure. What financial return have Albertans received for investing over \$500 million in the Swan Hills waste treatment plant?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The province of Alberta has received a great deal from the operation of the plant. True enough, it hasn't been all monetary, but the Swan Hills waste treatment plant has rid Alberta of some very dangerous chemicals like PCBs. Another function that seems to be lost in this whole discussion is simple things like the destruction of drugs. It's amazing when you think of the drug roundup program: 36 tonnes of unused drugs that would go and have been going into the sewer systems in the province, in the cities, and discarded in many other ways. That has been cleaned up.

When you look at the petrochemical industry that is advancing in this province, what would happen to those by-products of the chemical industry if it weren't for the Swan Hills plant? Are you going to start finding them in landfills? Where are they going to be located? So I think to just simply zero in on the dollar number of the cost of having this plant in Alberta is a very, very misleading and misguided way to deal with this facility.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: is the government offering prospective buyers the same guaranteed profit it gave Bovar for operating the Swan Hills waste treatment facility?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned – I think it was the day before yesterday; actually it was yesterday according to *Hansard* – the fact is that we are now asking for proposals for qualifications. Basically what that means is that we're trying to scope out what it is

that the proposed operators might need. We also want to know their qualifications, what kind of expertise would they bring to the table. This will all play in the call for proposals to actually move the plant out from the provincial government and into the private sector. But we've got to make sure that whatever happens in the future with that plant, it's there to operate for the benefit of Albertans and that it is doing a job that cannot be done by any other mechanism.

2:10

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question is to the same minister again. You talk about the benefits that we've received from it. Will there be payments made, or if the plant can't operate on a sustainable basis, will it be shut down and the other alternatives that are out there to deal with those wastes investigated?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, in conjunction with the Department of Environment there is always the investigation of other means of handling this very toxic material. The fact is that some of the companies that are showing a lot of interest in this plant have expertise. They've operated these kinds of plants all over the world. I find it very interesting that yesterday the opposition raised somewhat similar questions indicating that in fact there are technologies out there and plants out there that are mobile that could handle these wastes.

It's amazing, Mr. Speaker, when we're dealing with multinational companies coming to look at this plant, the comments we're hearing from them about this plant's ability to handle waste that no other technology can handle. These are companies that are dealing all over the world. So I'm having difficulty understanding how they happen to know of these other companies that have mobile equipment that can do it, yet the multinational companies that are interested in purchasing this plant don't know about them.

THE SPEAKER: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Infrastructure as well. The Bovar annual report says that there is not sufficient hazardous waste flowing into the Swan Hills Treatment Centre to maintain its viable operation. The report also says that the plant was operating on a negative cash flow basis. Is the plant operating at full capacity right now?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, the plant currently is not receiving tonnage equal to its capacity. Also, when you talk about the amount of material that's necessary to make that plant operate, one of the things that I learned in talking to some of these people that are interested in operating the plant is that there are many things you can do in the operation. For example, with the diet the plant takes to operate, if you balance the material that produces a lot of heat in the destruction process with the material that doesn't, you can in fact operate at a much lower cost, but you've got to balance that diet. From what we have heard, that has not been the type of operation that has been occurring in the past.

Another thing they always point out to us is that the fee schedule that has been in place does not encourage some material to come to the plant. If you change that fee schedule, in fact it may be economical to destroy some of that material in the plant instead of processing it and concentrating it and then just moving that portion to the plant.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Infrastructure: in your negotiations with these multinational and international companies are you proposing or are they proposing the importation from the international market to Alberta of wastes that can be destroyed in that plant?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, we are not proposing to change the policy that the Alberta government has currently.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader.

DR. NICOL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the negotiations are you also talking about changing the fee schedules, and are you going to be talking to the individuals who are affected by those fee schedule changes when you enter into these agreements with the multinationals?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, of course there is a limit to how far we get into the operation of the plant. When we call for proposals, the companies that will be answering certainly will be doing their due diligence. They will be talking to the producers of this material and talking about the fee schedule and how they may attract more material to the plant.

THE SPEAKER: Third Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the Minister of Infrastructure said that they weren't going to get too involved in the business of the Swan Hills waste treatment centre, because in December of 2000 the government took over ownership of that particular centre. To keep the facility operating, the government entered into an agreement with Sensor Environmental Services Ltd. Few details of this arrangement have been made public. My questions are to the Minister of Infrastructure. Will the minister confirm that it has already cost taxpayers a minimum of \$2.5 million in management fees to Sensor to operate the plant in this year?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, to correct the impression that the hon. member was trying to leave with the Assembly and Albertans that we were heavily involved, the answer to the hon. member's question earlier – he was talking about in the future when a private operator is operating. We will not be heavily involved at that point. That would strictly be an operation by the private sector.

As far as the fee schedule, Mr. Speaker, there is always a cost of doing business, and this is one of those costs.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, will the same minister confirm that on top of the \$2.5 million in management fees, it will also cost taxpayers between \$4 million and \$5 million a year in subsidies to Sensor to keep the plant open, based on current cash-flow projections?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, you know, I really find it quite a contrast when the hon. member that is just now asking the questions is supposed to be the Environment critic, pretends that they want to protect the environment, pretends, I guess, that this material doesn't exist and that we don't need to somehow destroy that material. The fact is that we don't profess to be able to operate that plant as efficiently and to the full capacity of the plant, and that is one of the reasons that as government we are trying to get out of it.

MS CARLSON: To the same minister: will he give this Assembly a breakdown of the \$20 million in his ministry budget for the Swan

Hills waste treatment facility? What are those tax dollars going to be spent on?

MR. LUND: Mr. Speaker, of course, we just went through the budget process, and I'm surprised that the hon. member didn't show more interest in the \$20 million that was in the budget for this year, but certainly once the money has been expended, that will be in the public accounts.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

### Water Quality Standards

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Premier of Saskatchewan proposed that the Western Premiers' Conference push the federal government to establish a national infrastructure program that will deal with the need to update Canada's aging water infrastructure. Meeting last weekend in Banff, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, representing hundreds of towns and cities in this country, unanimously passed a resolution calling for national standards in water quality. My question is to the Minister of Environment. Will the minister acknowledge that Alberta like many other parts of Canada has a serious problem with ensuring safe drinking water for its citizens?

DR. TAYLOR: No, Mr. Speaker, I will not acknowledge that. We are one of two provinces that has adopted the national drinking water quality standards. One of two. In some cases our standards are even more stringent than that. I will acknowledge that there are some difficulties in smaller centres across the province that we are working on to improve.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister please tell the House about the situation in the hamlet of Walsh in his own constituency, which has had to boil its water for the last three years because it is unsafe?

DR. TAYLOR: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. I'm very familiar with that situation. I'm not sure how much time you'll give me, but I could give you quite an explanation of that, but I will try and be brief.

Essentially, Walsh is a very small hamlet just near the Saskatchewan border. It has had a drinking water problem for about three years. The problem is one of turbidity; that is, the particles that are in the water. Walsh basically gets its water from a dugout, which then feeds down to the community. The municipal district has recognized that this has been a problem. Two years ago the municipal district contacted engineers and brought in engineers and spent – I can't remember the exact figure – several hundreds of thousands of dollars putting in a solution to that problem that was recommended by the engineering firm that was consulted.

2:20

This solution has worked in many small communities around the province. For some reason it did not work in Walsh, and they are presently looking at it as we speak. The engineers are back there, and they are presently looking at that situation to see, one, why it hasn't worked when it's worked in other situations and, two, what they can do to make it better. The department has already committed to help fund any further things that need to happen in Walsh.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the minister how long he's been aware of the situation in Walsh in his constituency and what steps he has taken since becoming Minister of Environment to correct the situation.

DR. TAYLOR: Well, I've been aware of the situation considerably longer than the member opposite whose researcher just contacted our director yesterday to find out about this situation. I will continue to represent my constituents, and we will continue to work on solving that problem. The problem will be solved in spite of what that member may say.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Forest Fires

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are seeing firsthand the damage that fires can bring to our communities and people in Alberta. Albertans are afraid, afraid for the safety of their communities and for themselves. Just this week a raging fire two and a half miles south of Redwater threatened the Juniper Hills subdivision. Some 30-plus families had to be evacuated, with an uncertainty if their homes would be there when they returned. All my questions today are to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. The first question is: can the minister give an update on the current provincial forest fire situation?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That's a very good question, and no doubt there's a lot of interest in that particular area. As you are aware, the extreme dry conditions we have in Alberta are something that are not that common. Even the experts that have been involved in forestry, even out of the province that are here helping us right now, have never seen situations as bad as they are right now. Thank God that it rained some the last couple of days and has watered down some of the extreme conditions that are out there.

Presently we do have about seven fires that are still out of control. We have four fires that are being held and 21 that are under control. To date, of course, we've had close to 400 fires already, and about 120,000 hectares have been burned. Fortunately, a lot of it is not in heavily forested areas.

The largest fire we had of course is the Chisholm fire, which is partly in my constituency and partly in the Member for Lesser Slave Lake's constituency. That one burned a total of 80,000 hectares and actually took some merchantable timber, which we have to reassess and try to accommodate the needs of the quota holders and the FMA holders that are involved in that area.

MR. BRODA: Mr. Speaker, to the minister: what resources do we have in place to assist in stopping these wildfires from creating any further damage?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. In fact, the resources we have were put in place this year a month earlier than we normally do. Most of the initial attack crews and some of the standby crews and some of the equipment that was on standby were recruited on the 1st of March this year rather than the 1st of May or April, so we were ultraprepared, but at this time we have over 1,600 firefighters

out there working, and additionally we have another 500 field experts, dozer operators, medical people, and specialists helping to fight the fires. In fact, at Chisholm alone we have over 346 firefighters at that particular fire. In addition to that, we have over 100 helicopters, over 100 dozers working across the province. We have also over 300 employees that are helping us from out of the province, including people from Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, B.C., and Northwest Territories. We are doing everything we can to ensure that we do provide the most important thing out there, and that's human safety.

MR. BRODA: My final question to the minister: does the minister have an estimate on how much has been spent in fighting these forest fires to date?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, of course we are trying to always manage the amount of dollars spent in fire suppression, but in this particular area the first priority is human life and the losses individual families are faced with when a number of homes burn down and families lose all their belongings. So that would be a top priority.

As far as the actual cost, we've spent to date about \$25 million, and \$4 million of that was specifically targeted at the Chisholm fire, which is, of course, the largest fire.

Again, I'd just like to indicate to Albertans that the individual losses of families and, in fact, the loss of the two employees of the department are the biggest losses we can find. That is the most important part, not the dollars.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

### Life Lease Properties

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In increasing numbers seniors and others in this province are investing in life lease properties to serve as their primary residence. Nevertheless, there is concern about security of investment in life lease properties. My questions are all to the Minister of Seniors. Does the government not consider it a legislative deficiency that there is no significant protection for owners of life lease properties?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, the member may or may not have a good point; I don't know. But we must remember to keep in mind that a life lease arrangement is similar to any other mortgage arrangement that you have. At this particular juncture I don't think it would be prudent for the minister or the Ministry of Seniors to enter into that field without first of all having a clause, which we do not; secondly, ensuring that these life leases are implemented as they should be; and thirdly, I think it's an issue that if it arises, we will certainly deal with it and deal with it prudently.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. What consideration is the government making to protect life lease investors not only during the construction phase of their property but for the entirety of their ownership?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, again I would indicate that this particular area is one of a contract when you're buying a home, and I would think that at this particular juncture there are likely sufficient protections in it when you enter into a contract. If there are not, then I would appreciate a note from the hon. member. I'll bring it



through the proper ministries within the government to ensure that if there is legislation required, we will in fact address it.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll work on it over the summer.

The third question: given that advertising for new life lease housing in Edmonton notes that the development will provide security of tenure, to what extent does current residential tenancy legislation protect security of tenure?

MR. WOLOSHYN: Mr. Speaker, that particular sector does not come under my ministry.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Civil Service Retention

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. British Columbia is going through a major ideological realignment as a result of the overwhelming victory of Mr. Gordon Campbell's government. As B.C. begins putting together its new government, there is speculation that we may lose some of our best civil servants to lucrative offers from B.C. My question is to the minister responsible for the personnel administration office. Mr. Minister, what is your department doing to ensure that Alberta retains our excellent and valued public service employees?

2:30

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, we really do have an excellent Alberta public service. I would indicate to you and to other Albertans that are looking in today that recently our Alberta public service received a national award. It was in recognition of the corporate human resource strategy that we put together sometime ago.

I think it should be viewed almost as a compliment that the media has speculated about potential raids on our service. Again, this is a free country. We pride ourselves in our democracy. Certainly as a representative of the public service today I want to indicate to all of our employees that we intend to remain competitive in a very hot marketplace, but as Albertans we need to be always vigilant about the tremendous, tremendous advantages we have in living in this province, raising our families in this province, and contributing as best we can as a public service to all Albertans.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess having an excellent public service also requires an excellent minister to head it, so my compliments to him.

THE SPEAKER: Sorry; that's a preamble.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

### Cataract Surgery Contracts

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Cataract surgery in Calgary is controlled by five clinics. In March last year internal correspondence within the CRHA obtained under FOIP and apparently written by an ophthalmologist says: "We have unwittingly created an oligopoly that has greatly benefited the facility owners above the other stakeholders." To the Minister of Health and Wellness. Given that the same clinics and investors control eye surgery this year as last year, will the minister explain that an oligopoly still exists in cataract surgery in Calgary?

MR. MAR: Well, surely to goodness, Mr. Speaker, an oligopoly among a number of them is better than a monopoly under one system. The test is not whether or not it is an oligopoly or a monopoly providing the service. The test is: is this service being provided to Albertans in a cost-effective and effective and efficient manner?

We review these contracts. We review them scrupulously. I've said on a number of occasions and a number of times in this Assembly and outside of this Assembly in response to the hon. member's questions and in response to questions outside of this Assembly that there is a process by which we review these contracts. It is completely transparent; it is completely in the open. The rationale that is provided for the approval of each of these contracts is available on the department's web site. If he or any other Albertan wishes to evaluate for themselves the rationale that is given for the approval of a contract under the Health Care Protection Act, he and others can look for it themselves. They need not go into this matter by raising the question in the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the purpose of privatizing eye surgery was to bring in market forces and given that all reported prices for cataract surgery in the CRHA are identical among the five clinics, will the minister confirm that market forces are failing among the for-profit clinics in Calgary?

MR. MAR: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, it may demonstrate that they are operating in a very efficient manner. They have reduced their costs as much as possible in order to ensure that the service can be delivered in an appropriate and a safe way, still allowing themselves some profit. I don't think that that's a dirty word at all; I should add that.

The cost of providing those cataract services under those contracts is very similar in cost to the cost under the public system. The great advantage, however, of having these services done outside of hospitals and in private surgical facilities is that it frees up surgical space in hospitals for much more significant types of surgery.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that principal shareholders in two of the five clinics are also senior officials in the CRHA, how can the minister deny that conflicts of interest exist?

Thank you.

MR. MAR: I can say that because unlike my friend across the way, my feet are firmly rooted in reality. I am obsessed with reality, unlike him who is obsessed with this type of innuendo.

I have said, again, on a number of occasions – and I'll be happy to repeat it again, Mr. Speaker – that each regional health authority has very significant conflict bylaws. Those bylaws are the same conflict bylaws that apply to members of this Assembly, including the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, and it is completely transparent. Those conflict rules, the contracts, the rationale for the approval of contracts are all available on the web site. Members of the regional health authority absent themselves from decisions that are being made when there is a potential conflict, just as we would expect the same type of behaviour on the part of the Member for Edmonton-Riverview should he find himself in a conflict of interest as it relates to the business of this Assembly. It is completely transparent and completely available for any member of the public to examine these for themselves.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

### Homeless Initiatives

MS DeLONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many Alberta communities, including my home town of Calgary, homelessness is a growing concern. My question is to the Minister of Seniors. What is this government doing to help Alberta's homeless?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: The government recognizes that every community has different housing needs and different circumstances that are best resolved by local planning and decision-making. As a result, my ministry had asked seven major cities to develop community plans to properly address their individual needs. Those plans have now been completed as of December of last year and, as a result, have triggered some \$9 million of provincial money as well as federal money into the homeless initiatives.

I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that Calgary through the Calgary Homeless Foundation is being used as a role model by the federal government for assisting municipalities across the country in developing strategies to address the issue of homelessness. Also, I think it's very important to note that the city of Grande Prairie has been selected by the national Homelessness Secretariat to be used in the province of Quebec as a model for rural communities.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS DeLONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second question is also to the Minister of Seniors. What is the government actually doing now to address the urgent and immediate needs of the homeless?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, the first year of funding identified through the homeless policy framework implementation strategy has been used by communities to ensure that the immediate needs of the homeless are met, such as emergency shelter space and so on, for the most people. There are also a number of other ministries within the government that provide a variety of supports for less fortunate members, and I'll just mention a couple of them. Human Resources and Employment has some very significant programs. Children's Services is involved in a whole other series of programs, especially for women's shelters. Health and Wellness, AADAC, and the Alberta Mental Health Board are also in the business of providing support.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS DeLONG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is again to the Minister of Seniors. Although meeting the immediate needs of the homeless is essential, can the minister please tell this Assembly what his ministry is doing to develop more long-term solutions to homelessness?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Mr. Speaker, one of the major initiatives we've undertaken is to somehow partner with the federal government to ensure that we can end up getting some degree of co-operation with them, with the private and nonprivate housing sector, the municipalities, and in fact find these sought-after long-term solutions.

The communities that I mentioned, the seven cities, are going to be using some of the homeless funding in order to go the next step and provide some transitional housing and support services to these unfortunate individuals and families. Our priority has to be with those who are most in need and to ensure

that they have access to basic shelter and that the homeless in Alberta have the ability to get themselves off the street.

I might add, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to dealing with the homeless through that particular strategy, we also have a very significant rent supplement program, which is a first step in the transition, and that one has been increased in the budget significantly this year.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona.

2:40

### Disabled Children's Services

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children with special needs must often depend upon several government departments for service. According to the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities many are being lost in the shuffle. My questions are to the Minister of Children's Services. Why are these children still being caught in the bureaucratic differences among children's services regions and health regions?

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, possibly the minister of health would wish to supplement, but we do our very best through the Alberta children and youth initiative to ensure that the ministries liaise both at the provincial level and the departments at the local level through the health authority, through the children's authority, and through other providers like Human Resources and Employment, and we do our best to make sure that no child falls through the cracks.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me an ideal opportunity to advise that in the city of Edmonton with the Minister of Justice last year we partnered with the Zebra Foundation and with others for the launching of the planning process to make Pacific Plaza over here on 109th Street a one-intake process for children so that we don't have the fear of losing children through the cracks.

Mr. Speaker, one additional comment I should make. The Alberta Mental Health Board looks after a number of children who are receiving services, many of whom, no doubt, could have come to Children's Services because of similar problems, but sometimes people are reluctant for whatever reason to approach government for help. They go to other service agencies, nonprofit agencies. So sometimes where we really need the refinement is in our intake process, but we are available with those services for children.

DR. MASSEY: To the same minister, Mr. Speaker. Has the government considered introducing a benefits card to allow parents of handicapped children to access services from providers?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the member asks a very good question: what are the ways that we can help parents get the service? For example, in Ma'Mowe children's services, with the satellite communities that are a part of this authority, frequently there's difficulty in accessing that nonprofit organization that may receive government funding for certain specific types of service. I will be pleased to review with the department staff and also with Ma'Mowe whether or not such a card, such as the Gateway Association has, would enable families to make things more easily available.

Mr. Speaker, Gateway Association, who does in fact undertake the role of advocacy for many of these children, met with me in the last two months. We will co-sponsor a workshop looking at issues like this and hopefully will come up with some answers. The hon. member may have provided us with yet another idea for this type of approach.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what is done to ensure that these children are not denied service due to funding shortfalls in a particular department?

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, one might say that we are clearly not denying people today. If anybody ever provides me with a name of someone who's been denied service, I'd like to take a look at that name and follow up and do our due diligence. Never in the history of Alberta have so many children received care from the province. That is not a statistic that we can claim with pride but rather with a great deal of concern, that 15,000 children are part of the child welfare caseload, that we have an increased number of children in handicapped children's services, that we are working increasingly with children who require mental health services throughout the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member identifies is I think a problem much more broadly centred than in Children's Services or in any government department. I would suggest that this is a problem for all Albertans.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

#### **Health Services Utilization Commission**

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last year as part of the public relations blitz around Bill 11, the government set up the Premier's Advisory Council on Health to provide advice on the future sustainability of the health care system. Of course, no one has ever heard from that council since. Meanwhile, this morning the Minister of Health and Wellness announced a separate \$7 million study on the sustainability of the health care system. To the minister: given that the Premier's advisory council is already charged with studying the sustainability of the health care system and has at its disposal adequate funds to do the job, why does the Minister of Health and Wellness want a separate commission of his own to study the same problem?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, I find this to be a very constructive question, and I thank the hon. member for it. The Premier's council continues to do good work in that it continues to meet with many stakeholder groups from throughout the province. The individuals who are on the Premier's council indeed are recognized as being leaders in health care, and I think there will be good work that comes from the Premier's council as it relates to the big-picture strategic directions that our health care system should take.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is still important that while we have our eyes on a big-picture strategic plan, we should also look at the more day-to-day types of operations in terms of who provides what services and how we can provide a service better or at a lower cost than is currently done. So there is the potential for overlap. However, I'm satisfied that given the terms of reference that have been given to and discussed at some length with our chair of the Health Services Utilization Commission, the hon. Bonnie Laing, a former member of this Assembly, the former representative from Calgary-Bow, the potential for that overlap will in fact be eliminated and that both councils will continue to do good work in improving our health care system.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sounds like a wasteful example of overlap to me.

Why is the government reinventing the wheel by spending millions of taxpayers' dollars studying the utilization of health care services when the Canadian Institute for Health Information, which receives some funds from this government, already does much of the same thing?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is true that the Canadian Institute for Health Information does good work. However, much of that work is done at a national level. Not all solutions that are found at a national level will be applicable within the province of Alberta.

My expectation has been that just like the Premier's council works in collaboration with other groups doing similar types of examinations across the country, so too will Bonnie Laing's health utilization commission look at the information that is provided from other groups that are doing similar types of work. The ultimate objective is not simply to look at ways of spending more money in new areas. It is looking at ways of spending the existing money that we have in a more effective and efficient way. In doing that, Mr. Speaker, my expectation is that the Health Services Utilization Commission will look at existing work already done and will look at models that are done perhaps in other provinces or perhaps even in other jurisdictions throughout the world and ask the question: can those types of models be brought and successfully introduced and implemented in this province?

#### **Speaker's Ruling Preambles**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, earlier in the question period I applied the preamble rule against the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall and denied him a subsequent question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has violated that preamble rule, so I'm going to apply consistency and deny you the next question.

2:50

#### **Cloud Seeding**

MR. OUELLETTE: Mr. Speaker, as we are all aware, Alberta has severe dry conditions in almost every part of the province. The rain we are currently experiencing is welcome but not yet provincewide or sustained enough to have much of an impact. These dry conditions, which have led to the devastating fires of the past few days, may herald the potential for a disastrous season for the province's agricultural industry. It has been brought to my attention that insurance companies are taking up the practice of seeding clouds to prevent hail damage to crops. Several constituents of mine are concerned that this practice could also be preventing much-needed rain from falling. My question to the Minister of Environment: is this the case?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

DR. TAYLOR: Thank you. The member is correct that cloud seeding is happening by private insurance companies. However, Mr. Speaker, there's no evidence at all that it prevents rain. The studies quite clearly indicate that when clouds are seeded for hail, in fact they tend to provide more rain than if they are not seeded. We're not sure if it works for hail, but it certainly doesn't prevent rain.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. OUELLETTE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental question is to the same minister. If my constituents wanted to stop

the practice of insurance companies seeding clouds for hail suppression, who would they turned to?

DR. TAYLOR: Environment Canada, Mr. Speaker, has a weather modification act, and if they're concerned about that, I would suggest that they talk to Environment Canada. It's not an area of provincial jurisdiction. Talk to Environment Canada, and perhaps they could do that through the present member plus through their local MP.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. OUELLETTE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question is to the minister of agriculture and rural development. Can the minister tell me whether the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, which offers hail and crop insurance as a provincial agency, is involved in the practice of cloud seeding for hail suppression?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Premier.

MRS. McCLELLAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say that the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation does not participate in cloud seeding. I could also say that some years ago there was a pilot project done on cloud seeding to see if we could reduce the amount of hail or if the intensity of hail storms could be reduced. That pilot ended some years ago.

However, Mr. Speaker, I can also say that from what we've learned and what we understand from others who are involved in this, it is a very expensive practice and the results are very inconclusive, particularly in the area of hail suppression. I can also say that we have no plans of being involved in this procedure as a provincial government.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry, followed by the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

### **Workers' Compensation Board**

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On May 22 I tabled a letter dated March 27, 2001, to Mr. Ralph Canham from Mary Cameron, president and CEO of the Workers' Compensation Board, indicating that Mr. Canham would be receiving a replacement wheelchair. On May 25 Mr. Canham received a call from his caseworker's supervisor indicating that the commitment for a replacement wheelchair had been rescinded. This call came after Mr. Canham had been fitted with a new battery-powered chair at the Foothills hospital and told that it needed a few modifications and it would be his. My questions today are to the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Why is the WCB going back on its commitment to help this injured worker?

MR. DUNFORD: Mr. Speaker, I have no knowledge in front of me on this specific item. I assume that our department has probably been contacted about this particular issue, and if so, I'll certainly be glad to check on it, and perhaps then the answer is involved in some of the communication.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that Mr. Canham has been, in his words, a prisoner in his own home for two months, when will he get the wheelchair he needs, the chair promised by the president and CEO of the WCB?

MR. DUNFORD: Again, Mr. Speaker, we'll have a look at whatever documentation we have, and certainly if there's anything that the hon. member wishes to forward to my office that might help us in that search, we'd be very, very pleased to accept it. This is to my knowledge certainly our first contact with this situation, but I have to confess that I don't see all the mail that comes through our office.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BONNER: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Given that it will take an additional four to six weeks after the approval of his chair, when can Mr. Canham expect to get a speedy resolution to his problem?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, we all know that question period appears on television right across the province, and it's very, very important that we as honourable members look competent and experienced with what we do, but I'd say to the hon. member: there's no reason that you have to stick to a script on your questions. You asked one question; you asked a supplementary. I tried to answer as honestly and as truthfully as I possibly can, yet it's as if you're not listening to what I'm saying. I don't mind questions at all. Question period should be a very open type of operation so that people can bring the government of Alberta to task.

I want to point out that what we're dealing with here today is the Workers' Compensation Board, that has the responsibility under a board of directors to provide its day-to-day operation. Now, if this particular gentleman has a real problem, then I think we should be discussing it, and I'm wondering why you didn't call me at 10 o'clock this morning, at 8 o'clock last night, or whenever you became aware of this if you were really honestly wanting to work with me to find a resolution to this. This is just bringing up a person's name – I hope you've cleared with him, because now you've put his name into the public record, and now we'll deal with it as best we can.

### **head: Recognitions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

### **Myrna McCann**

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I wish to pay tribute to Myrna McCann, a very special Calgarian who passed away this spring. Myrna was a very exceptional woman who was an accomplished wife, mother, daughter, nurse, sister, aunt, and philanthropist who successfully lived her life as an example of one who gave selflessly to all who were fortunate to have been touched by her.

Thirty-eight years ago Myrna married Murray McCann, and together they nurtured a strong, old-fashioned marriage and raised five wonderful children. Grandy witnessed the miracle of 13 beautiful grandchildren, who became the centre of her universe. Myrna always took great pleasure in not only supporting but watching those around her enjoy life, whether children or adults. With the love of her immediate family surrounding her, she was fearless and strong right to the end.

Myrna McCann was truly one of God's special people, and though God has called her home, the precious love felt for her and the respect for her ideals will always live in the hearts of her family and many friends. Bon voyage, dear Myrna.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

### Darlene Johnson

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to recognize one of my constituency's hardworking teachers. Mrs. Darlene Johnson, a grade 1 teacher at Bertha Kennedy school in St. Albert, was recently awarded a Prime Minister's award for teaching excellence. Mrs. Johnson was chosen from 215 nominations for her leadership, innovative teaching methods, and most importantly for her incredible commitment to children and to teaching. Mrs. Johnson's nomination was made by a group of St. Albert parents and is one of only 10 recipients in all of Alberta and one of only 65 in all of Canada.

The parents of the children of Bertha Kennedy have passed on to me that they are amazed at the enthusiasm and the learning achievements of their children in Mrs. Johnson's classroom, and they are constantly encouraged to become involved in their kids' education throughout the year.

3:00

Mrs. Johnson has been teaching for 20 years in Legal, Morinville, and now St. Albert. Mrs. Johnson is also the mother of three, and her husband, Laurent, is also an educator.

My constituents and I congratulate Darlene Johnson on her Prime Minister's award of teaching excellence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

### Augustana University College 90th Anniversary

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to recognize the 90th anniversary of Augustana University College in Camrose. Augustana University College, originally known as Camrose Lutheran College, was founded in 1910 by Norwegian pioneers who came to this country and settled in the Camrose area. Augustana is a liberal arts and sciences university whose mission is to prepare women and men intellectually, morally, and spiritually for leadership and service in church and society.

On Sunday, May 27, I was proud to bring greetings from the province to Augustana University College's 90th graduation ceremonies. In light of the Norwegian roots of the Augustana University College, the guest speaker for the 2001 graduation ceremony was His Excellency Ingvar Havnen, the Norwegian ambassador to Canada.

Augustana began offering university work in the fall of 1959 as an affiliated college of the University of Alberta and became a university college in 1985, when the first BA degree was granted. Augustana now grants baccalaureate degrees in the arts and the sciences and is expanding its facilities and programs to accommodate an enrollment of approximately 1,000 full-time students.

For dedicated service and educational leadership over 90 years Albertans say thank you and congratulations to Augustana University College.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### Senior Citizens' Week

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Next week, June 3 to 9, is Senior Citizens' Week in Alberta. As the Official Opposition critic for Seniors I'd like to extend on behalf of my colleagues our deep gratitude and sincere thanks for the legacy seniors have given all Albertans.

In my many meetings with seniors across the province I've been told that what seniors want most today is that we recognize both past

and future contributions, that the government policy walk the talk. Enough reports and studies, they want to see these plans come to fruition, and they want to be at the table, included in policy-making before it's a done deal. They'd like that the myth of seniors being responsible for high health care costs be dispelled, that the programs for seniors cut in the early '90s be restored, and that home care and housekeeping services be expanded. My thanks to all the seniors I've met and for their advice. I will keep working for them.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Highwood.

### Darcy Jones

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I'd like to give recognition to the brave and quick actions of a constituent and former student of mine, Darcy Jones of High River.

One evening some days ago Darcy discovered an intruder rummaging through the family van, which was located in the backyard of their family home. Because he'd been the victim of someone taking things from the van a few months before, Darcy demanded to know what the fellow was doing. The thief turned and fled down the alley with Darcy in hot pursuit. Darcy, who is a competitive mountain bike rider, caught up with the individual, who then pulled a knife. However, Darcy was able to subdue and control him until the RCMP arrived.

Thanks to Darcy Jones' quick action the thief has been charged with the murder of little Jessica Koopmans and is now safely behind bars.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

### Federation of Canadian Municipalities

MRS. TARCHUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the town of Banff hosted the Federation of Canadian Municipalities' 64th annual convention. By all accounts it was a tremendous success as over 1,600 elected municipal officials representing large and small, rural and urban municipalities from across Canada and several hundred other family members gathered in Banff to participate.

Under the theme A Municipal Odyssey the conference featured an impressive list of keynote speakers, and all who attended enjoyed warm Alberta hospitality among the spectacular beauty of our majestic Canadian Rockies.

Today I am proud to rise and recognize and congratulate the entire staff of the town of Banff, all 70 of them, who generously donated much time and energy in ensuring the success of the four-day convention. I would also like to recognize and thank entertainers Tom Jackson, Susan Aglukark, and Amanda Stott, who donated their time and put on a sensational concert raising money and awareness for affordable housing issues and suicide prevention. It truly was a weekend to be proud to be an Albertan and proud to be a Banff resident.

Please join me in congratulating all involved at the FCM for a job well done.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

### Youth Options Program

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and recognize a wonderful program that operates in my constituency of Edmonton-Highlands. Youth Options aims to identify the needs of

youth at risk of becoming involved in gang activity and then designs alternative programs of value to them.

Youth Options has been operating in Edmonton-Highlands for four years. Two staff members, Colleen Fidler and Lorne Demchuk, who are with us this afternoon, run a variety of programs giving youth in the area alternatives for recreational activity. Two examples of such activities include a summer golf program with professional mentors and an art program.

My commendations to Ms Fidler and Mr. Demchuk for the fine work they are doing in Edmonton-Highlands with Youth Options.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, as this is the last opportunity this week for recognitions, let me also add the following list of activities coming up. From May 28 to June 1 is Dutch Elm Disease Awareness Week. May 28 to June 3 is Safe Kids Week. May 31 is World No-Tobacco Day. June is Dairy Month. June is also Leukemia Awareness Month and Stroke Month. June 1 to 8 is Brain Injury Awareness Week. June 1 to 9 is National Transportation Week. June 3 to 10 is Environment Week. June 3 is also National Cancer Survivors Day. We've already heard that June 3 to 9 is Senior Citizens' Week. June 3 to 11 is Water Safety Week. Zeleni sviata, as observed in the Julian calendar, is also June 3. World Environment Day is June 5, and June 6 is Clean Air Day.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, you have a purported point of order.

#### Point of Order

##### Allegations against a Member

MS CARLSON: I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), which states "makes allegations against another member," in reference to an exchange in question period between myself and the Minister of Infrastructure. The minister made comments to me stating that I only pretended to protect the environment. While I don't have the Blues in front of me, that is certainly, I think, an inaccurate statement and an accurate reflection of what he said. It also would be I think appropriate under 23(i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

Now, Mr. Speaker, had it been another member in this Assembly, particularly some of the newer members of this Assembly, they might not have paid that close attention this session, but certainly that particular rule doesn't apply to this member. He is the former Environment minister in this province and has been subject to many, many questions by myself, reviews in budget debates. I am on the record repeatedly since having taken the Environment critic portfolio in 1995, on questions in question period, on debates in the Legislature, on estimate debates, on motions that have to do with environmental protection, on points of order on that particular issue, on private members' statements, on recognitions. I think that certainly he stepped out of line today when he made those allegations.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure on this point.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad you did not call it a point of order, because certainly this doesn't even come close to that qualification.

I always maintain that one needs to be judged more on their actions as opposed to what they say. While the hon. member is accurate in her summation inasmuch as she has on a number of occasions said things, that's true, but when you think about what she has said – for example, today there were nine questions basically around the cost of the facility at Swan Hills. The cost, Mr. Speaker.

Now, if in fact people are really concerned about the environment, really concerned, deeply concerned, want to protect the environment

from harmful chemicals, I find it very strange that you would put a dollar value on it. The fact is that what the waste treatment centre at Swan Hills has done is protect the environment, and you really cannot put a dollar value on it. So to continually bring this up in the context of dollars, I have to question the integrity of the statement that they are anxious to protect the environment. I just find that very strange.

3:10

I can go back to another instance. About four years ago I was trying very hard to protect some areas in this province and more specifically the forest land use zones. Currently it's a policy, and the way it stands, you can run a bulldozer in a forest land use zone, but you cannot come in with a quad. To me that seemed very strange. So under a miscellaneous statutes act I wanted to put in a law that would have some teeth through the Forests Act, but the hon. member and her party would not agree to put that in. That was an action on my behalf to protect the environment. With all the verbiage they still did not accept it. So I stand on my first point: action speaks much louder than words.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands on this point of order.

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the first point that I would make is that the minister's points dealt more with the argument between the members than with the point of order, but I would refer you to section 23 (i). Clearly, in my view, to suggest that the opposition or any member merely pretends to do what they are saying they are doing is imputing "false or unavowed motives to another member."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Do any additional hon. members want to participate in this point of order?

The Blues say the following. When the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie asks the question, the hon. Minister of Infrastructure responds in this way:

Mr. Speaker, you know, I really find it quite a contrast when the hon. member that is just now asking the questions and is supposed to be the Environment critic pretends that they want to protect the environment . . . pretends I guess that this material doesn't exist and that we don't need to somehow destroy that material. The fact is that we don't profess to be able to operate that plant as efficiently and to the full capacity of the plant, and that is one of the reasons that as government we are trying to get out of it.

Now, the hon. member, assisted by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands, basically referred to Standing Orders 23(h) and (i).

I was hoping to get through the question period today and stand up at the end of the question period and congratulate all hon. members of the Assembly for the level of decorum and the civility, given the lengthy sittings of the past few days.

I would like to point out that the rules that we're talking about in Standing Orders are articulated in the book *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* at page 525. "The use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly forbidden. Personal attacks, insults and obscene language or words are not in order."

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has certainly clarified her position on this question today, and I might point out that while not a model for the operation of question period, the minister's comments were part of the cut and thrust of the debate, and this is not a point of order.

head: **Orders of the Day**head: **Written Questions**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to move that the written question appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain its place.

[Motion carried]

head: **Motions for Returns**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise pursuant to Standing Order 34(2)(a) to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

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

**Bill 209  
Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet)  
Amendment Act, 2001**

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin on Bill 209 today, I'd like to recognize and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly five health care practitioners from the Kidsafe Connection pediatric injury prevention team at the Stollery children's health centre here in Edmonton. They've come this afternoon to listen to the debate on Bill 209. They are Jackie Petruk, Kathy Nykolyshyn, Adele Dorey, Lori Balch, and Melody Cheung. We're pleased that they've joined us today for the debate, and I'd ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to move Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001.

My intention in putting this bill before the Assembly today is twofold. First, it is to protect children and youth under the age of 18 from head and brain injury while operating or riding a bicycle as a passenger, which in turn saves individuals and their families from needless suffering. Second, it's to save our health care system substantial cost through the prevention of injury, disability, and death due to bike-related accidents involving children and youth under the age of 18 who are riding bicycles without the protection of a helmet.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to express a special thank you to the hon. Minister of Transportation, who, through a number of meetings, guided me with his wisdom and strong support throughout the formation of Bill 209. I am also grateful to the minister's departmental staff for their assistance with the bill's content. I must admit that it has changed considerably since the first draft was written.

I also wish to thank and acknowledge Mrs. Jackie Petruk and staff from Kidsafe Connection and also Dr. Louis Francescutti, who in his many roles is the director of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. I'd like to thank them for their influence and inspiration in assisting with the provision of statistics and research for this bill.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to a number of colleagues who

expressed an interest and either discussed their concerns, which you may hear about today, or voiced their support for the bill, which we'll hear about as well today. I would like to thank Kelly Nicholls from research and Shannon Dean from Parliamentary Counsel. I'd like to thank them both for their valuable assistance. I see that Kelly Nicholls is here as well to listen to the debate. I saw that she just walked into the Assembly, and I'd ask that she rise as well and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking about a public concern for our children's safety. As summer approaches, their risk for injury dramatically increases. Outdoor activities are associated with significant risks because there are so many variables. As a responsible citizen or concerned parent we can take measures to decrease these risks and help prevent injuries. Bill 209 focuses on bicycle-related preventable injury to our children and our teens.

Bicycling is one of the most popular summer activities, and it's an enjoyable exercise for people of all ages. However, as with a number of fun outdoor activities, research has shown that there are risks associated with bicycling. In our province over the period of a year there are approximately 6,500 people who are admitted to emergency with bicycle-related injuries. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we can prevent some of the most serious injuries a cyclist can sustain, and that is those involving the head and the brain. It is commendable that we've worked hard to make our roads and our communities safe and prevent what accidents we can by enforcing measures which reduce preventable injury, but I think it's now time to take another step to assist with prevention.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

There are measures available to us that have proved to be effective against traumatic injury suffered from bicycle accidents. Although it can be difficult to heal bones broken by falling off a bicycle, these injuries do eventually heal. A more severe reality lies in accidents which cause damage to the head and brain. These accidents are the most serious because the brain does not set like a broken arm. Traumatic brain and head injury stays with a person for the rest of their life, Mr. Speaker, an injury which might have been prevented if the person were properly wearing a bicycle helmet.

3:20

It is for this reason that I've brought forth Bill 209. Studies have shown the results that bicycle safety helmets greatly reduce the risk of preventable head and brain injury in bicycle-related accidents. It is not only my belief but the belief of numerous support groups and the concerned public that legislation is necessary. Studies have shown that by coupling legislation mandating safety helmets with education about their proven effectiveness, we will greatly increase the number of our children who wear their helmets and thereby decrease their potential to suffer such life-threatening injury.

This past long weekend many Albertans were enjoying the outdoors. People put away their ice skates, their skis, their snowboards and took out their bikes. That is because bike riding is fun for everyone in the family. They've changed considerably since you and I had our first bikes. Specialization has led to everything from racing bikes to mountain bikes. Bicycles are now highly technical machines that have a number of gears and added features to enhance the speed and performance of the bicycle and make them far more enjoyable to ride. No longer are bicycles the heavy, slow inventions with just one gear that you and I were lucky if we could ride up a hill. I watch in awe as people race down the street or on bike paths, and they just seem to go faster and faster. Did you know, Mr. Speaker, that 90 percent of our young people ride bikes? It is the

single most popular recreational sport activity of our children and youth in Alberta.

Because children are the most frequent bike users, it's a fact that children under the age of 18 are hospitalized with the highest incidence of bicycle-related injury. Not only can this be attributed to greater numbers of young riders, but it is a proven fact that the common behaviour of youth is to be just a little bit less cautious. That's because they believe they're more resilient to injury, but we know that every year in Alberta around 6,500 visits are made to emergency departments for bike-related injuries. Approximately 4,500 of those visits were made by children and teens under the age of 20.

Mr. Speaker, 82 percent of children who suffered major trauma were not wearing a helmet. I think that this should concern all of us. Statistics show that 70 percent of our young people between the ages of 13 and 17 do not wear a helmet while riding a bike. It's really quite alarming, that 70 percent. Most of the accidents which occur happen close to home, and very few bicycle-related accidents involve motor vehicles. Most accidents are caused by falling from a bicycle. Statistics show that a fall from just two feet can cause permanent brain damage, and a fall from a bike traveling only 20 kilometres per hour can cause death.

Approximately 75 percent of bicycle-related deaths involve head injuries which might have been prevented if the cyclist were properly wearing a helmet. Bicycle helmets have proven to reduce the risk of brain injury by 88 percent, head injury by 85 percent, and upper- and mid-facial injury by 65 percent. It is not always common knowledge about how effective they are in decreasing head and brain injuries, which is why I believe mandatory helmets for bicycle riders under the age of 18 is so important. By legislating young riders to wear safety helmets, it would create a greater awareness about injury prevention and encourage the compliance of young bicycle riders.

As bicycles are no longer what they used to be, Mr. Speaker, neither are the safety helmets that riders wear to protect their heads. In order for the bike helmet to meet safety requirements, it must go through internationally recognized tests which are approved by the Canadian Standards Association. Helmets are now lightweight, cool, easy for the rider to wear, and they're not expensive. CSA-approved helmets can be bought for \$15 to \$20.

The brain is the most important organ for us to protect from physical trauma. It is important to note that you do not have to be riding your bike at a high speed or fall from a great height to have a head or brain injury. Traumatic brain injuries can and do occur with biking accidents that to some may have seemed quite minor, and that is because three separate processes work to injure the brain. There's bruising, tearing, and swelling. In an instant your life has been changed forever, and it will never be the same again, ever. This change is difficult, and you know, Mr. Speaker, the simple truth is that no one, absolutely no one, can predict accurately all of the outcomes. This leaves those who've been injured and their families between very high hopes and deep despair.

Every brain-injured case is different, Mr. Speaker. As I said earlier, you cannot repair injured brains like you can a fracture. The effect of each brain injury is very individualized. Sometimes young people with mild brain injuries suffer severe consequences in their daily lives, and more rarely some young people with a severe injury will have a relatively mild impairment, but either way the brain injury is forever. A child or teen with a minor impairment may be able to function at school, volunteer for community activities, have great friendships, and be very articulate. However, virtually every aspect of their life is affected, if even slightly, by the brain injury.

There is also some evidence that the natural aging process and impact on mental abilities are affected. In other words, even a mild

impairment gradually worsens over the child's lifetime, and as I said, a brain injury is forever. So riding bikes may be fun, but there's also a great deal of risk involved, especially if your child or teen rides without wearing a helmet. Bike helmets go a long, long way to protecting your head from injury.

Traumatic brain and head injury has gathered the attention of many groups who support legislating bicycle safety helmets to reduce the amount of injuries sustained by riders. There are other jurisdictions in Canada and around the world who have experienced positive effects in both helmet compliance and reduction of brain injury because of legislation. Ontario has had mandatory legislation for riders under the age of 18 since 1995. British Columbia has had universal bicycle helmet legislation since 1996. These provinces were followed with helmet legislation in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Manitoba.

Extensive research and study has also come from Australia, which has had universal mandatory bike helmets for over 10 years. Their experience has proven the positive results of bringing forward this type of legislation. The analysis of injury data from Victoria, Australia, showed a large reduction, up to 51 percent in some regions, in the number of bicyclists killed or admitted to hospital with head injuries within the first 12 months of enforcement. This is a substantial decrease in head injuries from bicycle-related accidents. Injuries also fell even further in the second year, by 70 percent, which was concluded to be due to greater experience and public awareness about how the helmet should fit and how the chin strap is properly worn to truly prevent injury.

Study after study shows that helmets of any type which meet international standards, to which the CSA complies, can prevent head injury from falls and crashes when properly worn. The main barrier, often stated by medical professionals, is the lack of awareness of the potential benefits from helmets. Studies have shown that legislation appears to be the most effective tool in a promotional and educational campaign on helmet awareness and compliance.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, in the Capital health region we have a renowned pediatric trauma centre at the Stollery children's health centre. Kidsafe Connection is a pediatric injury prevention program which is supported by the Children's Health Foundation and the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation. We also have the very distinguished Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research. Both centres have a wide network of community organizations and agencies who've worked collectively for a number of years on creating awareness about the seriousness of bike-related injuries for all age groups. They take pride and care in basing prevention strategies on clear evidence. The result has been that the efforts are focused on strategies which are known to be effective.

One injury prevention strategy with clear evidence for effectiveness is the use of bicycle helmets. Kidsafe sent an information package to all MLAs in this Legislature recently which showed that in a one-year period in Alberta, 6,430 people visited an emergency department for a biking injury and that 4,048 were children or teens, less than the age of 20. Of the overall visits, 442 were due to a brain or a head injury, and of those, 373 were intracranial injuries, 51 were fractures of the face, and 18 were fractures of the skull. Pretty serious, Mr. Speaker. Over the six-month summer season we have approximately 75 head injuries from biking per month.

There are over 40 groups in Alberta who've worked hard over the years on this important legislation. This legislation received an extraordinary response of 77 percent support through a scientific phone survey of Alberta parents. Mr. Speaker, this shows the public is concerned about child safety. They believe that a strong emphasis



should be placed on taking the steps necessary to increase risk prevention and decrease the number of injuries.

Only half of all Albertans wear their helmets when they ride a bicycle. Those who don't are suffering 80 percent of the traumatic brain and head-related injuries, and the majority of these injuries occur in our young people. I consider the principle of bike helmets preventing head and brain injury to be useful and practical information for our young people and their families. More and more scientifically documented, solid, up-to-date information to support this principle becomes available every single day.

We must educate our children about health-enhancing behaviour through injury prevention strategies. The challenge is to teach them that they can stay healthy through the very simple practice of wearing a helmet while riding a bike. We need to empower our young people to shift from what is a destructive behaviour to one that is constructive. Good judgment in all areas related to bike riding should be encouraged.

Mr. Speaker, we also learned from the Minister of Health and Wellness that costs are continuing to increase dramatically in health care – a budget of 3 and a half billion dollars in 1995 will increase to \$7 billion by 2002 – and it's imperative that we look at ways to increase the sustainability of the system. There's evidence that prevention of three severe head injuries would save the health care system a million dollars. Given that there are approximately 450 head/brain injuries mild to moderate to severe per year, the cost savings could well be in the range of \$150 million per year.

I'd like to close by saying that Bill 209 is about the health and wellness of our children. It is about the high value we place on their well-being. It is about a desire and need for the protection of those under the age of 18 from bike-related injury, disability, and death through the use of a properly fitting helmet. Mr. Speaker, I happen to believe this is a step in the right direction, and I would ask all of my colleagues for their support of Bill 209.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**THE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry.

**MR. BONNER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001, and I would like to congratulate the Member for Calgary-Cross for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature and for sponsoring this bill. It is a much-needed bill.

In this Assembly on March 31, 1999, the Minister of Transportation brought forward Bill 24 at that time. I am quoting from *Hansard*, where he said, "The act will also provide enabling legislation to deal by regulation with issues such as bicycle helmets and riding in the back of pickups." Now, on May 3, 1999, the then Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert brought in a couple of amendments to the bill, and certainly one of those was that people riding bicycles would have to wear helmets. Also, the second amendment was that people riding bicycles or as passengers on bicycles would also have to wear helmets. Unfortunately, both of those amendments, Mr. Speaker, were defeated that day. So here we are two years later still trying to get legislation passed to protect our children. This is a piece of legislation that I hope, in this particular instance, will be passed and we can move on.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

Now, then, this is not precedent-setting legislation either, Mr. Speaker. For example, we legislated that people had to use seat belts

when they were operating a motor vehicle or as a passenger in a motor vehicle. We legislated that people riding motorcycles or passengers on motorcycles had to wear helmets. We also have had special needs; for example, children under a certain age have to be strapped into their car seats. These all have to be approved types of helmets, car seats, whatever. That type of legislation was passed, and we have moved on. It has all been for the safety of Albertans.

As the hon. member had stated earlier, cycling is the number one activity. It is a very popular activity, particularly when we get co-operation from the weather. Of course, cyclists are exposed to many different risks, and certainly the types of risks have increased with the specialization in the design of bicycles that we have today.

Now, then, I don't know how many people in the Assembly realize that in Canada we have more bicycles than cars and that the number of bike sales has flattened out in this country and in this province. We saw recently where George's Cycle, a longtime establishment in Edmonton that has sold bikes and serviced bikes for many, many years, closed because the business isn't there as it once was. Yet even though the number of sales of bikes in this country has flattened out, the miles traveled by bicycle have increased greatly. Not only that, but we look at the reasons why there is a huge increase in the number of miles traveled by bicycles. We have people that use this mode of transportation not only for transportation but for fitness and certainly a very good form of fitness. As well, we have had a great increase in bicycles being used for communication, particularly in the cores of our major metropolitan areas. It is much easier to get around and quicker than taking a car or walking.

When we look at the causes of bicycle-related injuries, Mr. Speaker, we have to realize that only 2 percent of motor vehicle related deaths are bicyclists. Among the majority of those, the most serious injuries were to the head, so it certainly is important that bicyclists wear helmets.

3:40

As well, we look at statistics, and I quote from the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute:

Young riders most often are responsible for their crashes, and then probable responsibility decreases with age. Older riders more often aren't responsible for their crashes.

When we look at this, certainly with the lack of experience by younger riders and the lack of ability, we would expect more accidents of their own doing in that particular age group.

Now, as well, when we look at bike accidents, Mr. Speaker, many of these include the operator of the bicycle losing control of that bicycle. When they lose control and fall off, they might strike a fixed object, and they can also collide with another cyclist, a pedestrian, a motor vehicle, whatever. So when we are looking at these types of injuries and, again, where people are being thrown off their bicycles, we have to realize that wearing a bike helmet can reduce the risk of head injuries by 85 percent. So it is certainly a major point in the argument for people riding bicycles to wear helmets.

As well, Mr. Speaker, bicycles are considered vehicles on the road, and bicyclists have all the rights and responsibilities that drivers have. When we are looking at bicycle helmets, we are looking at a piece of equipment that certainly is there to protect the head. As the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross mentioned, there are CSA approved bicycle helmets. We also have other bike helmets that are approved. These are by ANSI and Snell, and of course all of these would have a sticker indicating that these helmets are approved.

Now, then, bike helmets are different helmets from, say, a hockey helmet. They are designed to absorb a single blow from large

objects and usually at relatively high speeds. This can be a blow to the head from a car, from a collision with another person that's riding a bike, hitting their head on the pavement or striking their head against a curb. The bicycle helmet generally has an outer shell that is of a harder material, which will prevent the damage when scraping along pavement. All manufacturers of bike helmets certainly have the recommendation that if a cyclist is involved in a rather serious accident and the helmet does receive a heavy blow, that helmet should be discarded and a new one brought in.

It was also quite interesting in my research, Mr. Speaker, that in speaking with people that owned bicycle shops, one of the interesting points brought up was that bicycle helmets are mandatory when racing in the United States and are also mandatory in the Olympics. Those are very, very important instances where bike helmets are mandatory and certainly with some very top athletes. So if it's good enough for them, I think it's certainly good enough for our children.

When I look at this, I also would have liked to have seen Bill 209 be more extensive, that all people who ride bikes would have to wear helmets and that it wouldn't be an age issue at all. Now, then, the reason I say that, Mr. Speaker, is that as parents we have a tremendous responsibility. We have the role of mentor and model, and certainly if children see that we are not wearing helmets, then of course the first argument they're going to raise is: well, you don't wear one, so why should I?

As well, another statistic that I happened to dig out of the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute is that when we look at deaths with cyclists, deaths of older bicyclists are an increasing problem. Seventy-one percent of 1999 bicycle deaths were riders 16 years and older. This compares with [only] 32 percent of bicycle deaths in 1975.

So we are having certainly an increase in the number of deaths of older riders and, again, a statistic that I think should be taken into consideration and should at some point be made part of this bill.

When we look at the need for bicycle helmets, this has been recognized by many groups in the province. The owner of United Cycle here in Edmonton had indicated to me that there were over 10,000 helmets that have been made available in northern Alberta. These have been made available by the regional health authorities, by the Capital health authority, by the Royal Alexandra hospital Tour de la Sante, and free helmets in this program go out to inner-city children that do participate. As well, in Edmonton we do have Sport Central, an organization that is comprised of volunteers who supply free sporting equipment to underprivileged children here in the city, and this includes bicycles.

Now, as well as supplying bicycles free of charge to underprivileged children, one of the conditions that those children must make when they get a bike from Sport Central is that they will accept a helmet that goes with the bicycle. They go one step further and make the children promise that they will wear those helmets when they're operating their bicycles.

As well from the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute, they had tracked what happens with the helmet use rates when we do have legislation and when we don't. In 10 instances where people had instituted the mandatory use of helmets, they saw a jump in the usage of helmets in nine of those cases, and in only one of those cases did the use of bicycle helmets decrease.

Certainly, as well, Mr. Speaker, the bicycle industry recognizes the importance of safety equipment. They fully support mandatory use of bike helmets, and they feel it is only one step in the right direction. Again in my discussions with the owner of United Cycle here in Edmonton, he was involved with the Capital health authority and the Royal Alexandra Tour de la Sante, and as part of that program what they did was they went out and they addressed groups of children about the importance of wearing bike helmets. The

program had a doctor from the regional health authority talking about the number of instances where he has seen children come into the hospital with many injuries and how many of those injuries were to the head. When the owner of United Cycle got up to speak, they said: well, what are you doing here? He said: I'm here to put that doctor out of business. He said: if you wear the right type of equipment, certainly the incidence of injury is going to be drastically reduced. So I think that is a good model for this bill. We're here to put the doctors out of business when it comes to dealing with bike injuries. Certainly the mandatory use of bike helmets is a step in the right direction.

3:50

Now, as well, industry in realizing its role realizes that people are not wanting to go out and purchase one helmet for when they're cycling, one for when they're on their skateboards, or when people are on in-line skates or riding scooters. So, Mr. Speaker, the industry has gone to a great deal of expense to look at a helmet which will be able to be used in many different sporting disciplines. These helmets are now becoming available.

Now, the minimum cost of a helmet is in the range of \$10 to \$15. Of course, those helmets must be CSA approved in Canada, and there are many, many different brands out there. So access to helmets is certainly not an argument as to why people would not use bike helmets.

Now, then, as well, Mr. Speaker, when we look at research, certainly a lot of research has gone into injuries that have been as a result of bicycle accidents. We do have a far better understanding of head injuries, and especially with the game of hockey these days we have a much better understanding of the long-term effects of concussions. There just is so much more consumer awareness that is available to society today. When we look at this, we look at initiatives that are currently under way by Safety City, by United Cycle, by Sport Central, by the Grey Nuns hospital, by Tim Hortons, by our Capital health authority, and there are so many groups that are promoting and certainly wanting mandatory bike helmets to protect our children.

You know, there is such a growing body of scientific evidence. It has established patterns in injury, and the patterns are highly predictable. There are, Mr. Speaker, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 100 Canadian children who die each year as a result of bicycle accidents, and the majority of these are because of head injuries.

So what I would like to do in closing is once again congratulate the member for bringing Bill 209 forward, for sponsoring that bill here in the Legislature, and I would certainly urge all members of the Assembly to support this legislation. I think it is far overdue.

Thank you very much.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for this opportunity to speak in favour of Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act.

First of all, I'd like to thank my colleague from Calgary-Cross for caring about our children and for presenting this bill.

I believe that Bill 209 will be an important piece of legislation for Alberta. Laws regarding the use of bicycle helmets are being practised worldwide and in Canada, Mr. Speaker. There are many statistics which clearly show that bicycle helmets help to prevent head injuries and save lives. There is also equally clear evidence that legislation making helmets mandatory makes a difference. Bill 209 will make a difference in this province by preventing head and

brain injuries. In many surveys that I have conducted in my constituency of Red Deer-North, it was clear that although no one wants another law in their face, it is more important to protect the children of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, bicycling is a worldwide activity and an important means of transport for millions of people. Worldwide bicycle sales have grown far more rapidly than car sales over the last 20 years, so the number of new bicycles produced is now three times the number of new cars. The same can be said for our province: bicycle sales in Alberta have increased over the last decade, and this has led to an increase in cycling traffic on our provincial roads and highways. Every day people all across this province use their bicycles to get to work, to get in shape, or simply to relax. As the Member for Edmonton-Glenarry stated, we have more bicycles than cars.

Mr. Speaker, bicycle riding is not risk free any more than other modes of transport are risk free. Excellent evidence from all over the world consistently shows that bicycle riders who go without head protection are roughly three times more likely to suffer head injuries in a crash than those who wear a helmet. Also, a bicyclist who sustains a head injury is 20 times more likely to die than a rider who suffers other kinds of injuries. Many of my constituents have told me stories about how a helmet saved them from very serious injury.

Mr. Speaker, the notion that pedal cyclists should wear protective helmets was once seen as ridiculous. Helmet use for motorcycle riders was seen as the smart thing to do. Motorbikes were perceived as fast and dangerous machines, and crashing a motorbike carried a clear and undeniable risk of death or injury. Therefore, opposition to helmet use for motorcyclists has always been relatively muted and based on arguments for civil liberty rather than on the effectiveness of helmets.

On the other hand, pedal bikes have long been perceived as relatively slow. Falls and collisions are perceived as mere inconveniences mostly suffered by children. The freedom to have one's hair flying in the wind was seen as much more important than the small risk of head impact. Mr. Speaker, these perceptions have changed as people are recognizing the seriousness of head and brain injuries.

One of the first evaluations of the effectiveness of bicycle helmets was conducted in Adelaide, Australia, in 1984. This study showed a consistent and statistically significant relationship between helmet use and reduced severity of head injury. The authors of this study estimated that the risk of death from head injury was three times higher for an unhelmeted rider than for a rider wearing a helmet of poor protective quality and 10 times higher for an unhelmeted rider compared to one wearing a high-standard helmet. This study provides important support for the moves that were already under way at that time in Australia to increase the use of protective helmets by bicyclists.

Partly based on the findings of this study and others like it, a law requiring that approved safety helmets be worn by all bicyclists came into effect in the Australian state of Victoria in 1990. This was the first such regulation in the world, Mr. Speaker. Several studies were launched in the wake of this Australian legislation to see what kind of effect it had on reducing injuries to cyclists. The research highlighted the fact that two years after the introduction of the helmet-wearing law in Victoria, there were 70 percent fewer cyclist casualties with serious head injuries in collisions compared with 28 percent with other injuries.

Mr. Speaker, researchers concluded that the introduction of the law was accompanied by an immediate and large reduction in the number of bicyclists with head injuries. This appeared to have been achieved through a reduction in the number of bicyclists involved in crashes plus a reduction in the risk of head injuries of bicyclists involved in crashes. Clearly, this law worked for the state of

Victoria, and similar legislation can work for the people of Alberta.

In Canada several provinces have introduced bicycle helmet legislation over the last few years in an attempt to make cycling safer. There are many different types of regulations, Mr. Speaker. Some provinces have made the use of a helmet mandatory for all age groups, whereas other provinces have regulated helmet use based on the age of the cyclist. In '96 the province of B.C. became the first North American province or state to require bicycle helmet use by riders of all ages on public roads. B.C. had some serious statistics to contend with. In a 10-year period ending in '95, 137 cyclists died in B.C. In the province about 75 percent of all bicycling fatalities and two-thirds of hospital admissions for bicycling-related injuries involved head trauma. These statistics motivated the legislators in B.C. to take action. With several studies indicating the effect of helmets on lowering head injuries, the province put forward legislation to make them mandatory for all ages when riding on a public roadway. A study conducted three years after the legislation came into force showed that it had a dramatic impact on the number of British Columbians who used helmets when cycling. With more British Columbians wearing helmets, the province has seen a marked decrease in the number of head injuries related to cycling, and the legislation has been considered successful.

4:00

The provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have also followed the lead of B.C. and have mandatory helmet laws for all ages. Both of these maritime provinces responded with legislation after completing research similar to the kind done in B.C. that revealed that helmets could save lives and reduce head injuries in their provinces.

Ontario addressed mandatory legislation in a different way. Their government's bicycling helmet law of '97 does not apply to all age groups like in B.C., Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. In Ontario if you are under the age of 18, you are required by law to wear an approved bicycle helmet when traveling on any public road. Cyclists over 18 are encouraged to wear helmets for their own safety but are not required by law as in B.C., Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Ontario's research showed that helmets can be extremely effective in preventing head injuries.

The only other province that has a mandatory helmet law in Canada is Manitoba. Manitoba's law states that only children under the age of five must wear bicycle helmets when on public roads.

The World Health Organization has also entered into the debate surrounding the use of helmets for cycling. In 1991 the organization launched the World Health Organization helmet initiative. The goal of this organization is to promote the use of bicycling helmets worldwide by publicizing their proven effectiveness to prevent brain injuries when cycling. WHO, the World Health Organization, also works in co-operation with several jurisdictions and groups around the world to promote the use of cycling helmets through various program initiatives and legislation development.

Now, finally, Mr. Speaker, this debate has come to Alberta. Several groups have been key in bringing this debate forward. Health organizations, police services, and many others have been working to add Alberta to the list of provinces and jurisdictions around the world that have helmet legislation. Several of our physicians representing groups like the Sport Medicine Council of Alberta and the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research have also spoken in favour of this needed legislation. They all have noted the benefits of wearing a helmet and are looking to the Assembly for some sort of legislation regarding this issue.

I have made references to many statistics in my presentation so far, Mr. Speaker. I've mentioned various injury statistics and fatality

numbers from across Canada and overseas, but Alberta has its own dire statistics to consider. On average, over 6,000 Albertans visit our emergency rooms with cycling injuries every year. In 1999 it was recorded that 461 of these visits were specifically for head injuries. It is time for our province to address this reality and move to make cycling in this province safer. I believe Bill 209 would do this.

A mandatory bicycle helmet law in Alberta for people under 18 would also complement the findings of the health summit of 1999. One of the key recommendations of the various stakeholders of the summit was that our province should put more emphasis on prevention of injury through the promotion of healthy habits. As a wealth of evidence has clearly demonstrated, a healthy and safe choice when cycling is the use of a helmet. Bill 209 would work to advance the findings of the summit and also work to save lives and prevent injuries.

Mr. Speaker, legislation regarding the mandatory use of helmets for minors also happens to be the wish of the people of Alberta. The Alberta children's survey of 1997 showed that 77 percent of parents want this kind of legislation for their children and that 66 percent of all people in our province supported bicycle helmet legislation for all Albertans regardless of age. Undoubtedly you've heard these statistics in this debate already. I'm sure that you will hear them again. The point must be made that Albertans want this sort of legislation, and I believe it is the duty of this Assembly to provide it.

This government has made many laws to make traveling in our province safer. We have rules about how fast you can travel on our highways or how you can pass another vehicle on Alberta roads. We have laws that make it safer for our children to take the bus to school or for them to use crosswalks at intersections. There are regulations regarding baby seats and also seat belt laws. All of these laws and several others help to make getting around in Alberta as safely as possible a little easier to accomplish. Bill 209 is no different from these other laws.

I have one more statistic to offer this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I think it will help to clarify the urgency of this bill. Albertans under the age of 18 have the highest rate of serious injury and death from bicycle accidents in this province. Making it law to wear a helmet when riding a bike will help to lower the number of deaths and injuries from cycling in this province. This bill will save lives and prevent injury.

Personally, Mr. Speaker, I believe we should be debating a mandatory cycling helmet law for all Albertans. Yes, it is important to ensure that our youth are wearing helmets to protect them, but we should also ensure that everyone in this province is provided with protection. With that said, I would like to say that I believe Bill 209 is a good start.

There are so many good reasons to support this bill. We certainly have enough statistical information to make an informed judgment on whether or not this bill should become law. The numbers tell it like it is. Helmets save lives and prevent serious injury. We can also point to how similar legislation has been successfully applied in other jurisdictions in Canada and overseas. As lawmakers we always try to be careful to put legislation in place that will work. This sort of legislation has been proven to effectively work. Bill 209 will work for Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, there are many mothers and fathers who will appreciate this legislation that will enforce their constant nagging about wearing a helmet – Mom and Dad are not cool, and a helmet would ruin the hairdo. I wish I could have used the authority of the law to help me enforce this safety issue with my children when they were teenagers.

I urge all members of this Assembly to vote in favour of this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have to admit that in speaking in second reading of Bill 209, I take a certain perverse delight in seeing a government member bringing forward a bill that in fact reflects exactly an amendment that was brought forward by a Liberal member several years earlier, although I have to admit that when the previous Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert did bring forward that amendment, the government defeated it on a voice vote. But I notice from a standing vote taken later in the same afternoon that the proposing member was in fact in the House, so I'm hoping that at the time her colleagues were defeating our amendment, she in fact was supporting it, seeing as she now brought forward a bill that's exactly the same. As I said, a perverse delight.

Speaking to Bill 209, I've actually had a really interesting time with this bill. I went to visit one of my schools last Friday. We got into discussing how a law is created, and I brought forward the proposition that's contained in Bill 209. We had quite a rigorous discussion in the class. This is with room 15 in John A. McDougall school. This is a mixed 5 and 6 class. It turned into a great discussion, and we attracted other people from the school who came in to participate or at least to observe what we were doing as we worked our way through what we believed would be the best proposal to have in the legislation. In fact, earlier today I did table a follow-up letter that the class sent me in which they were detailing the decisions that we had come to last Friday.

When we first looked at the issue, it was a question of: is having a bicycle helmet for people 18 and under a good idea? Yes, indeed, there was very quick consent and support for that being a good idea, and the kids were more than willing to accept it. That was instantaneous. Well, why? They agreed that it wouldn't prevent accidents, but it would mean that people wouldn't get hurt as badly when they had an accident on their bicycle.

Almost immediately the class was questioning: well, if it's good for people under 18 to be wearing a bicycle helmet, then why wouldn't it be equally good for people over 18 to be wearing a bicycle helmet? Good point, said I. They came to the conclusion that there should be additional legislation or an amendment to this bill that bicycle helmets be mandatory for adults as well. Actually, they go further than that and say that everybody should have to wear a helmet, so that would be under 18 and over 18 and everybody else. Maybe that means politicians as another group.

4:10

Now, John A. McDougall school is a school that's in the centre of Edmonton, and we do face some financial challenges there. Certainly the issue came up very quickly about where the students could get helmets. Would it be possible that every time you bought a bike, a helmet came with it for free? This is an issue for students attending this school and certainly some of the other young people that are in Edmonton-Centre. We talked about it a bit, and there was an understanding that, well, no, it wasn't likely that there would be free helmets. Although there are different places that may assist with the purchase or make reasonably priced ones available, still, 20 to 40 bucks is a significant expenditure for many of the students in the class, and they were very aware of that. They were conscious that if in fact a law were passed that bike helmet usage was mandatory, they would then be in a position that they'd be breaking the law if they rode their bikes without a helmet, and they didn't want to be in that position and were actually a little concerned about supporting a law that would then turn them into lawbreakers, in effect.

I think that that is an area that needs to be looked into. It's not the

mandate of those of us sitting in the Assembly today to be addressing that issue, but I think it's something we certainly need to be doing as leaders in our community: to be looking for those connections, to be encouraging the private sector and other agencies that may be able to help in this area.

The kids are suggesting that if you can't afford a helmet, then a store could be set up where you could buy a used helmet or trade for one. The trading for one is kind of interesting, where you could sort of trade a skateboard for a bicycle helmet or something like that. So they had some really innovative ideas, and you can sense how exciting the discussion got as we really started to work with what was possible here. There are some good suggestions, I think.

Then we got into what would be reasonable punishment for someone who didn't obey a mandatory helmet law. In the beginning there were suggestions of some pretty stiff fines. These students took this very seriously. If there was to be a mandatory helmet law, then to not wear a helmet, you'd be breaking the law, and they felt there should be a significant punishment involved. We started out talking of fines that were in the \$500 to \$600 range. Given that earlier I had commented that a \$20 helmet could be difficult to secure, with a \$500 to \$600 fine, put in that context, you can see the importance that the students placed on following this law.

We tried a couple of different combinations of what was possible and what was truly a deterrent, and at one point one of the students suggested that their bike be taken away, that they wouldn't be able to use their bike for a period of time. Instantaneous response from the rest of the class. They were horrified that someone would not allow them to use their bikes for a period of time, and we recognized, all of us, that that was probably a pretty good deterrent if it had such a strong reaction from the students.

In fact, when the students wrote back to me, they said that if you don't wear a helmet, then you should have your bike taken away for seven days. So they would lose the use of their bikes for seven days if they weren't wearing their helmets. If there was a second time that there was a violation, you would have to pay a fine of \$20 to \$50, which is a pretty significant amount of money. The class asked me to bring this forward on their behalf, which I've been very pleased to do, and to support Bill 209, which I'm also very pleased to do.

So I'd like to thank the member who proposed the bill for giving me the opportunity to work a really interesting democracy lesson into the classroom. It was really a great experience for all of us. They've taken it very seriously, and I hope the member will take very seriously the suggestions the class has made.

We here in Alberta – you gotta love us – struggle with laws that try and put any kind of mandatory restraint on us. Certainly many of us are old enough to remember the battle around the seat belt laws, motorcycle helmet laws, a number of other times where there's been an attempt to say: for your own good you should do such-and-such. There's the countering argument that adults have a right to be stupid if they want to. Yes, they do. And, no, we don't want to mandate every single activity in human existence. But as the years have gone on, we have now amassed enough data that we can look and go: yeah, you have the right to be stupid on your own, but you don't have the right to be stupid on your own when it's going to cost everybody else a bunch of money, particularly when it's entirely preventable.

We have been collecting quite a bit of information and opinions that were sent in to us. I was pleased to have some response from my constituents coming through a question on my web site, I think. This is from Calvin and Erin Daling, who wrote to me asking that I support this private member's bill. The two of them, in fact, would "support a law requiring all Albertans to wear a bike helmet." They felt, particularly in the teen population, that due to peer pressure kids

don't wear helmets, and they felt that this was a very important safety issue and suggested that Alberta "follow B.C.'s example in enforcing helmet use."

They raised the issue that they didn't feel that their health care dollars should be going to pay to repair the injuries of people who didn't do anything to help themselves. They also raised the issue of insurance rates, which globally affect everybody when you've got a high insurance premium based on the actuarials because people are getting into accidents and costing the health care system a lot and costing the insurance industry a lot. Eventually that filters down to everyone, and everyone is paying higher insurance rates. So I appreciate the interest that my constituents took, and there's one example of the kind of e-mails that I was getting.

I think we also all received the Stollery children's health centre pediatric intensive care unit letter on bicycle injuries in children being preventable and signed by a number of doctors. The Member for Calgary-Cross had also mentioned the Kidsafe Connection and also a program through Capital health, the child health program. Again, I think we all received that. Lots of good information. We dug up some information through the Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute; also lots of information there supportive of bicycle helmet usage and stacks of statistics on how it has reduced injury rates and lowered hospital visits, et cetera. The Member for Red Deer-North has already gone through a number of those statistics.

4:20

I also received some information from groups and individuals who are not in favour of mandatory helmet usage. Their argument with making helmet use mandatory is that people just can't be bothered, and therefore they don't ride their bikes at all and they miss out on the health benefits of cycling. One person in particular, Jeremy Clayton, is quite adamant and sent me a number of different web site downloads from other groups that were putting forward this same argument and other statistics that had been gathered.

We had the Victoria, Australia, example raised earlier showing a reduction in serious injuries with helmet usage. In fact, some of the information that Mr. Clayton brings forward was talking about the same studies exactly: yes, but there are fewer people now that use their bicycles down there because people won't wear a helmet. There were a number of examples: women wouldn't wear a helmet because it messed up their hair, some things like that. I appreciate that they are investigating people's actual reaction to this and saying that these were the reasons why people said they wouldn't wear helmets and therefore under a mandatory regime they wouldn't ride their bicycles.

I think the issue for us here is not so much that we won't have a mandatory helmet law because, gosh, people won't put a helmet over their hair, and therefore they won't ride bikes. I think the point for us to be working with here is about addressing those issues where people won't use their helmets. We should have a mandatory helmet usage law here. In fact, it should include those over 18, even politicians. Then we talked about working with the other issues that seem to cause people some hesitation in supporting such a law.

The other factor, as I stated earlier, around mandatory helmet usage is the cost and some people seeing the cost of the helmets as a barrier to them. We do have programs in Edmonton like Sport Central, which is a nonprofit organization which collects and repairs and spruces up used sporting equipment which is then given away to those that are in need of it. Actually, CBC Radio right now has been running about a two-week program to encourage people to bring used sporting goods in to them. I think it's possible to work with groups like that and to encourage them to be providing helmets along with the bikes.

There's also a group that does the Tour de la Sante out of the Royal Alex hospital, which was started by a doctor that, in fact, is no longer practising there. Some of the students that I met with at John A. McDougall school in fact participate in that Tour de la Sante, and they are given helmets when they go to participate in that, which is very helpful to those kids. So they do get access to a helmet that way.

The other group that I got information from that was not supportive of mandatory helmet laws was Le Monde a Bicyclette, Citizens on Cycles. They have essentially the same argument. They are lobbying for better bike paths and being able to put your bike on the metro or on the buses and transport it that way. They've got some very thorough suggestions on increasing bicycle usage. They have the same argument as Mr. Clayton had assembled from other sources, that helmets preclude people actually cycling. Their aim was to get more people cycling. Therefore, they didn't want to see mandatory helmet legislation. As I say, I think that with a bit of creativity and some will power and elbow grease, we can address those issues.

I have gone over the suggestions from my class, and I did send a copy of the letter over to the Member for Calgary-Cross. I have gone over much of the in-favour-of literature that I received, and some of the information that was not in favour of it, but I think those objections are surmountable.

I appreciate that the member did in fact provide a legacy for my colleague the previous Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert by following through on the amendment she had proposed that would have included mandatory helmet usage in the Traffic Safety Act, Bill 24 in 1999. I appreciate that, and I'll be sure to be sending her the *Hansard* so that she knows she's been immortalized that way.

I thank the member for following through on this issue. She feels very strongly on it. As well, I'd like to recognize the staff members who worked on this and others who assisted her. I think it's a worthy idea and one that we should all be supporting and following through on.

With that, I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

MR. AMERY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure to rise and speak in favour of Bill 209, sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

Mr. Speaker, on May 11 the Capital health authority and the Kidsafe Connection released a study that found that only half of Alberta bicyclists wear a helmet. It also found that adults wear helmets only 29 percent of the time when biking. This statistic is why I'm standing to speak in favour of Bill 209.

AN HON. MEMBER: Do you wear a helmet?

MR. AMERY: No, I don't have one on right now.

Bicycle riding is not a dangerous activity overall, but there are many dangers in areas where children ride bicycles. Mr. Speaker, we regulate a host of other things like seat belts, driving limits, motorcycle helmets, and many others. Why not bicycle helmets?

Mr. Speaker, children are the most vulnerable when it comes to head injuries. Even a simple tumble to the ground off a bicycle can critically injure a child when they knock their unprotected heads. Young children are especially at risk because of their stage of development not only skeletally but also cognitively. This limits their understanding and therefore influences how they behave in traffic situations. For instance, children may not understand

stopping distances, believing that a car can stop as fast as a person. They typically do not develop a sense of danger until the age of eight and may not understand the threats that cars pose.

Mr. Speaker, bicycle helmets are critical safety equipment. A child need only fall from a height of two feet and hit his head to suffer traumatic brain injury. A cyclist riding at only 20 miles per hour, an average speed for a young cyclist, can be killed by hitting his or her head on a hard surface. With this in mind, it is in the best interests of all Albertans to wear a helmet when biking, and Bill 209 is in the best interests of all Alberta children.

Mr. Speaker, here in Canada head injuries account for 75 percent of all deaths from bicycle injuries, and wearing a bicycle helmet reduces the risk of head injury by 85 percent and brain injury by 88 percent. Over 100 Canadians die each year from bicycle injuries, and children aged 5 to 14 account for one-third of these deaths. Cycling mishaps are the leading cause of hospital admissions for head injuries in children.

Whether children will voluntarily keep on wearing bicycle helmets has a lot to do with how insistent their parents are. Parents sometimes look the other way because they didn't have to wear helmets when they were kids, but there is more traffic and fewer sidewalks in many communities nowadays than when we were young. Today there are far more traffic dangers for children. Bill 209 is for those children whose parents need some backup in enforcing bicycle helmet usage.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, if adults choose not to wear helmets, so be it. When an adult suffers head injury because they did not wear a helmet, it is a tragedy, but it is one of their own making. When a child suffers a head injury because they did not wear a helmet, we can't say that they should have known better. They are children. The onus is always on the adults to ensure that children are protected.

Mr. Speaker, while it has been well documented that helmets save lives and prevent serious head injuries, what has not been emphasized as much is that bicycle helmet legislation helps prevent injuries by ensuring that helmets are worn. Information from a study in the United States concluded that from 1984 to 1988 more than 40 percent of all deaths from bicycle-related head injuries were among persons less than 15 years of age. During the same years more than 75 percent of persons treated in emergency departments for bicycle-related head injuries were less than 15 years of age. It has been shown that the majority of Albertans support mandatory helmet use, and many, many Albertans support Bill 209.

There are vigorous campaigns to educate Albertans to wear helmets when biking, but still, Mr. Speaker, it does not ensure that helmets are on the heads of every Alberta child. Bill 209 will ensure that the children have no choice but to protect their heads. Information from the United States study I cited previously found that legislation mandating the use of bicycle helmets effectively increased helmet use, particularly when combined with an educational campaign. Education often facilitates behavioural change. However, education alone is only so effective. Laws mandating helmet use supplement and reinforce the message of an educational campaign, requiring people to act on their knowledge.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, many members may be asking if legislation can really reduce the number of bicycle head injuries. I would answer an emphatic yes. Let us look at a simple example. When motorcycle helmets were universally enforced as law, the death rate from motorcycle accidents in Canada fell from 15 per 10,000 in the 1960s

to 6 per 10,000. We now look back at the debate with thoughts of: what were we arguing about? It is now considered common sense to wear a motorcycle helmet, and I am sure that in the future we will look back and remember so profoundly as to bike riding without a helmet and shudder at our recklessness.

Mr. Speaker, biking is a fun sport that children of all ages enjoy doing. Here in Canada our biking season is not as long as some would like and some would want, but we enjoy it while it lasts. As the traffic increases and the dangers multiply, it is time that we ensure and encourage that young Albertans always ride with protected heads.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all hon. members to support Bill 209. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a few comments on Bill 209 this afternoon. It's certainly a legislative initiative that is worth supporting. Bill 209, of course, would make it mandatory for all persons under 18, whether riding or a passenger on a bicycle, to wear an approved helmet.

This bill is certainly copycat legislation of the amendment that the Conservative government rejected from a previous member of this caucus. There was, of course, an amendment proposed, as was discussed earlier this afternoon, to the Traffic Safety Act, Bill 24, going back two years to 1999. Now, I was driving down the road with my seat belt on, and I was listening to CHED radio. The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross was discussing the bill on the public affairs program on CHED radio. I was listening with a great deal of interest. The first question that came to my mind was: how did that hon. member vote on that amendment that was before the Assembly in regards to Bill 24? How did other hon. members of this Assembly vote?

It's sort of curious that this is before the Assembly again. It's certainly an issue of public safety. We look at the statistics that have been provided by Kidsafe Connection – it was mentioned by other speakers previously – and the Children's Health Foundation of Northern Alberta. I'm grateful for this information because it's certainly been useful for this member, Mr. Speaker. In the two years since this government saw fit to defeat that amendment, a lot has happened. These are one year's statistics, so we can think that for two years there would be at least 12,000, perhaps 13,000 people visiting an emergency department as a result of a biking injury. Now, in the same two-year period since this government saw fit to defeat the amendment, there would have been at least 4,500 people hospitalized for biking injuries.

I guess I'm pleased that this legislation has come forward at this time, but where the government has been, where the private members have been who are not directly involved in Executive Council in regards to this issue, that remains to be seen, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the hon. Member for Calgary-East referenced statistics, and the hon. member is absolutely correct. I certainly appreciate the comments of the hon. member. Now, Capital health, the Stollery children's health centre, has issued an opinion on this to all members of the Assembly. The Canadian chair of the International Playground Association has also expressed an opinion on this. There is even a letter to the editor from a couple from Sherwood Park, and they express their opinion on the whole issue of mandatory bike safety.

It's a bill that we have to pass. I encourage all hon. members of this Assembly to support the initiative as presented today by the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross. Now, also, I heard in the remarks that were expressed by Calgary-Cross to members of this Assembly earlier this afternoon the name Dr. Louis Francescutti, who is an

individual who sees the importance of this legislation and how it will reduce our incidence of injury. The same doctor was referred to in *Hansard* two years ago and had the same opinion, but it was for whatever reason ignored. Hopefully, this was inadvertent, because if the amendment to this bill that was proposed in 1999 and now is coming forward as private member's Bill 209 was done on partisan issues, then I say shame. I say shame, because there have been a lot of people, whether they're adults or children, injured in this province as a result of bike injuries, and some of them, there's no doubt, would have been prevented with the use of bicycle helmets.

Now, realizing that this is for citizens of Alberta who are 18 and younger, perhaps this is only one step, and at some time legislation will come forward for the rest of the population.

At this time, in summing up, Mr. Speaker, I would encourage all members of the Assembly to promote healthy, active lives for all Albertans by supporting this private member's bill as presented by the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

Thank you.

4:40

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Gaming.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure this afternoon to rise and say a few words with respect to Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001.

I think this Bill that's before us today is a very sensitive Bill. There are a lot of varying views out in the public. I think it's a serious Bill when we bring forward legislation that legislates a person against himself. I can see legislation being brought into this House that legislates to protect the public or an individual against the action of an individual, but this Bill actually goes in an area that is personal responsibility, when you as a lawmaker decide that the government knows better than you yourself know. So it's a very, very serious move that we're considering here today and it shouldn't be taken lightly.

Those are not my words. Those are the words from a debate which occurred in this Assembly on April 13, 1987, and the matter that was before the Assembly at that time was mandatory seat belt legislation that was brought in pursuant to Bill 9, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 1987.

The reason that I went back to this is that it seemed to me that the debate here with respect to Bill 209 sounded very similar to the debate that occurred at that time. In fact, I would encourage members to review *Hansard*, because the nature of the debate around this is indeed very, very similar, although I must say, in listening to hon. members here today, that the state of science has come a long way and that those who are proponents of Bill 209 have very good information indeed on which to base their support.

The other reason that I went back to 1987 to see what went on at that time was because I've had some personal experience with respect to seat belts and the mandatory use of seat belts. In my particular family over the last two years we've had three accidents, and in each case the vehicle involved was a total loss. In two of the accidents, in my estimation, either death or serious injury could have been the result and, in the other, serious injury. None of those particular consequences came to pass, and seat belts were the reason in each and every case.

One can ask the question whether or not seat belts are worn because it's the law or because occupants are educated. I think it's always a matter of education, but there are people in our society who are law-abiding and therefore do what the law asks them to do. I think it's very important that we as a Legislature recognize that fact, because ultimately the laws that we pass dictate whether or not we walk the talk.

I support this particular bill for three reasons, and those reasons are based on what I consider to be the sound criteria for a private member's bill. The first criterion is that the bill must propose something that is intended to improve public good without adversely imposing significant burden on individuals. Secondly, the bill must have the potential to fulfill its intent, and the bill must outline specific guidelines that will result in the intention of the bill being fulfilled. The third crucial characteristic is that it should, to a reasonable extent, reflect the values and beliefs of constituents and stakeholders. In my estimation, Mr. Speaker, this particular bill, Bill 209, matches and meets each of the three criteria.

Bill 209 will save lives and prevent injury. Specifically, it will protect Alberta's children, our most vulnerable group and our most valuable asset. It will help keep our kids safe and ensure that the lives of families across the province aren't needlessly touched by tragedy.

In addition, mandatory bicycle helmets for minors would reduce the 75 emergency room visits owing to head injuries that occur on average over the summer months in Alberta, representing a cost saving to Albertans at many levels. Implicit in the objective of saving lives is the goal of saving needlessly spent health care dollars. We are continually attempting to ensure that our dollars are spent wisely and that they go further, and in my estimation this particular bill will assist in that goal. Treating head injuries from bicycle accidents has a price tag, and it's a very large one. Head injuries demand the use of specialized medical technology and the specialized skills of doctors, nurses, and paramedics. It's estimated that the lifetime health care costs for a child with head injuries, including intensive care and long-term care, is somewhere between \$1 million and \$1.5 million. That is taxpayer money and is money that could be better spent, particularly if we can avoid those particular injuries occurring at all.

Others have gone into some detail on the statistics with respect to bicycle helmets in other jurisdictions and the benefits of them. I think it suffices to say that I share the statistical evidence that has been put forward, and I would encourage members to support this bill.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder.

MR. RATHGEBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to enter the debate on Bill 209 as proposed by the Member for Calgary-Cross. I support this bill on the grounds that I believe it'll save the health and the lives of many of Alberta's children. Too many children go to the hospital with brain injuries sustained during a bicycle accident. Passing this bill I believe will reduce the number of children who go to our hospitals and will keep them out on their bicycles having fun, where they belong.

It's no secret that people should wear bicycle helmets if they are to be safest when riding a bicycle. Accidents happen to even the most experienced and controlled riders. The unexpected happens all the time, and in a split second a rider could find himself or herself flat on his back on the sidewalk with his head lying open. When such accidents occur, having a helmet on significantly reduces the chances of brain injury. The statistics are quite clear on this, Mr. Speaker. Wouldn't it therefore be better if all of us had a helmet on when accidents like that happen?

Let's look at some of the statistics for one moment. Bicyclists without bike helmets hospitalized with head injuries are 20 times more likely to die. In 1999, 461 people went to Alberta's hospitals with cycling-related brain injuries. In the United States, where now 15 states and many communities have enacted bike laws, 98 percent

of cyclists who were killed in bicycle accidents were not wearing helmets. The death rates of those in U.S. bicycle accidents are highest in the 13- to 16-year-old age bracket, Mr. Speaker. Children aged 14 and under are five times more likely to be injured in a bicycle-related crash than older riders. Among children 14 and under, more than 80 percent of bicycle-related fatalities are credited to the behaviour of the cyclist. The statistics show and are for the most part unequivocal that while kids like to ride bikes, they are by no means professionals and should be protected by the law. Most professional cyclists, by the way, wouldn't dream of hopping on their cycles without a helmet.

For those who think it is acceptable to let their children ride their bicycles without helmets on the neighbourhood streets in front of their house, consider this statistic: 59 percent of bicycle deaths among children under the age of 13 occur on minor roads.

Bicycle helmets reduce head and brain injuries by more than 85 percent, meaning that if an accident were to occur and the rider has a bike helmet on, he or she will be less likely to suffer an injury.

It is recorded that in the United States alone universal use of bicycle helmets by children aged four to 15 could prevent between 135 and 155 deaths as well as up to 45,000 head injuries and as many as 55,000 scalp and facial injuries.

The conclusion, Mr. Speaker, is obvious. Bicycle helmets prevent harm and save lives. Yet when we consider all of these statistics, it is saddening to note that more than 40 percent of all riders have never worn a helmet. When looking at these statistics, I have to respectfully disagree with those who argue that it should be the choice of the rider to wear or not wear a bicycle helmet. While there are many issues concerning the freedom of people to choose how they would like to act – and of course legislators have to always be cognizant of these arguments – in the name of good governance we have a duty to make legislation when an issue of significant public interest is at stake. A bicycle helmet law is justifiable, in my opinion, because it will prevent Alberta's children from accidental harm.

4:50

This is similar to the seat belt laws which the Minister of Gaming has just referred to. For example, consider that in Alberta we require drivers to obtain a licence before they can operate an automobile. We do this not only in the name of public interest but also in the personal interest of the individual driver. They would be endangering themselves by being on the road unprepared. Mr. Speaker, in my submission a bike helmet serves the same purpose. Just as we don't like to see people endangering themselves on the road, we shouldn't like to see it being done on bicycles either. Further, we've always had laws that oversee the actions of our children. These laws are designed not to control children but rather to teach them to become responsible citizens that are respectful of themselves, as they are of others.

Bill 209 should be seen in this light. As a comparison, again consider seat belt laws in Alberta and across Canada. Everyone in this House would agree that by and large seat belts save lives. Before the laws were enacted, it was not considered essential to wear seat belts. Now, after the implementation of the seat belt laws, people don't think twice about putting their seat belt on. It's become second nature, a part of the process of driving that most of us don't even think about; we just do it.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the same effect would happen with bicycle helmets. If you look at other jurisdictions, we see that once laws are brought in, compliance with the actions prescribed by the law shoots up in comparison to before the law was introduced. In the state of Maryland, for example, the use of bicycle helmets went



up a whopping 45 percent only eight months after their state government implemented a helmet law. Not only does this 45 percent represent a decrease in the likelihood of brain injuries to cyclists in that state, but it also lays the foundation for a lifelong adherence to safety while cycling. In the long run, this foundation will result in more saved lives, and if just one life is saved, then a helmet law will have done something great.

As well, we have to remember that this law is not intended to restrict the actions of adults. Only children will be affected. We have to remember that heads of small children are much more fragile, as they are still growing. By implementing a helmet law, Mr. Speaker, we're attempting to limit the amount of brain and head injuries that children will suffer. The statistics that I mentioned earlier only serve to reinforce the need for a helmet law. Also, it just doesn't seem to be the case that those fighting for cyclists' freedom are ultimately concerned with the freedom of their children to wear or not wear a bike helmet. In fact, most parents just want their kids to grow up smart, healthy, and safely.

Mr. Speaker, when we think about it, we know that many of these people concerned with cyclists' freedom have children, and I'm willing to bet that they don't let their own kids do whatever they like. Little Joe isn't allowed to have a beer whenever he'd like one, and little Sally isn't allowed to drop out of school just because she wants to. Part of parenting is teaching kids right from wrong and promoting their health, safety, and future well-being. Legislation aimed at promoting certain types of activities by children is no different.

For example, Mr. Speaker, consider smoking laws in Canada. The federal Tobacco Act states in section 8.(1) that "no person shall furnish a tobacco product to a young person in a public place or in a place to which the public reasonably has access." The purpose of this section is to protect young persons and others from inducements to the use of tobacco products and the consequential dependence on them. Right there we have a law designed to protect the health of children and to foster a healthy lifestyle. While some may argue that the Tobacco Act is an intrusion on a child's right to decide how he lives his or her life, I'm sure that most parents, many of whom are smokers, would disagree with those arguments. We should not view bike helmets any differently than the laws that prohibit children from purchasing cigarettes. Both promote a healthy lifestyle, and both will save children and parents a lot of needless worry and health problems down the road.

As a side point, Mr. Speaker, we all know that both the reduction of smoking and the reduction of brain injury free up substantial amounts of dollars in our health care system that could be better put elsewhere. Putting on a bicycle helmet has the dual effect of saving the rider's life and freeing up money in our health care budgets to help save the lives of others.

Now, those who are concerned with the personal liberty of children may disagree and may say that regardless of the potential personal and public costs, children should have the choice to decide whether or not to don a helmet. I have no problem standing here today to assert that we should not give into these arguments of a few dissenters. We're talking about laws that pertain to children, not adults. Personal choice arguments are fine among adults, but we should not stand behind them when creating legislation in the name of the safety of our children. We should also be mindful of the fact that 77 percent of Alberta parents agree that there should be bike helmet legislation for all children. The polls are on the side of Bill 209, Mr. Speaker, and I believe that we should follow what Albertans are telling us.

Finally, why don't we ask ourselves which is a greater freedom, the freedom to ride a bicycle without a helmet or the freedom to live after sustaining a bicycle-related head injury? Freedom is a tricky

thing, Mr. Speaker. It is in many ways the principal concern of all governments. However, the one thing that we are sure of is that after somebody dies in a bicycle accident, they do not have any more freedom. They are no longer around to enjoy freedom. As well, the parents of children who die while on their bikes do not have the freedom to enjoy watching their children grow up, make decisions, graduate from high school, and start an adult life. All of that could be taken away in the blink of an eye, or it could be saved by the minimal imposition of a bicycle helmet on the heads of our children. I would suggest that asking kids to wear a bike helmet is about as minimal an imposition on anybody's freedom that we can impose. I hope that I have shown even more strongly that putting bicycle helmets on the heads of our children actually enhances their freedom.

In light of all of these arguments, Mr. Speaker, I urge all members of this Assembly to pass Bill 209. The safety of many of our children will depend on it, and our children are counting on the members to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. CENAIKO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very excited to join the debate on Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001. I know the importance of helmet safety for young people, and with no hesitation I can say that Bill 209 is a great idea. I think this bill and the discussion it has garnered justifies and legitimizes the importance of helmets for safety.

Bill 209 will not single-handedly place a helmet on every young rider in Alberta, and it doesn't have to, because this legislation doesn't act on its own. The magic of implementing this bill will come from combining education, public support, availability, and legitimacy of helmets. This bill will go a long way to convince young people to strap on a helmet, just like they buckle their seat belt or look both ways before crossing a street. I have amassed years of experience related to traffic safety through my previous career and as a member of the Calgary regional health authority. In my experience, there has always been a great deal of concern for bicycle safety initiatives, especially helmet safety.

I think one of the biggest reasons why helmet safety continues to be an issue is because the consequences of riding unprotected are so preventable. I remember the work done between the traffic section of the Calgary Police Service and the Calgary regional health authority to find ways to make Calgary streets safer through programs promoting the safety of drivers and pedestrians. I have found that most people underestimate the speed that bicycles can reach if they are not slowed down by other traffic. At one point the RHA and the traffic section wanted to implement a maximum speed limit to protect riders on Calgary's Bow Valley trail, which is approximately 200 kilometres in length throughout the city.

As simplistic as it should be, time and time again people underestimate the speed and overestimate the maneuverability of bicycles. The reasoning for the speed limit was to reduce the risk that riders cause to themselves and to others on the trail. My home constituency of Calgary-Buffalo has a significant piece of the city's Bow Valley trail running through it. The strip of trail is often very busy, with pedestrian traffic of all kinds including roller bladers, joggers, and parents walking with their children. Although this is often an ideal setting for recreation, it is also prime time for bicycle accidents. With so much traffic traveling at different levels of speed, the probability of accidents increases. However, the number of people on the trail could be an excellent opportunity to make Bill 209 more effective, because the high level of congestion is a great way to reach those riders that insist on riding without a helmet. Police can

easily spot these riders on the trail, stop them, and inform them that riding unprotected is against the law.

I can personally think of several bicycle-related accidents that were completely preventable if the rider had been wearing a helmet. It's difficult to describe the frustration of seeing many young people injured and sometimes seriously hurt from bicycle/vehicle collisions.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, after the collision the fact that these injuries are so preventable goes through everyone's mind. I remember numerous times when parents, witnesses, and sometimes even the victim would realize that they should have been wearing a helmet. Bill 209 reminds these riders of the consequences before the accident occurs. We think of grisly collisions occurring between a bike and a large truck, resulting in serious injury or a fatality, or we think fatal accidents happen because of blatant rider error. However, I can think of several accidents that were normal wipeouts, having nothing to do with a motor vehicle.

One accident occurred in Lake Bonavista a few years ago. Police were called to the scene where a bike rider was killed from falling off his bicycle and landing hard on the street. The important part of this accident is that no other vehicle was involved. The adult individual died from hitting his head on the curb. He wasn't traveling very fast, but because concrete has very little resilience, a simple wipeout resulted in tragedy. Although we are quick to call this a freak accident, it should not have been that surprising to us. If the individual had been wearing a helmet, he would have got up, brushed himself off, and rode home. Although this type of accident doesn't occur every day, it's more likely to happen to people riding without helmets. We must make helmet use mandatory to stop these preventable accidents from happening to our children.

I agree that the onus must be placed on the parents or legal guardians to ensure that young riders are as safe as possible. I also think that most riders realize the importance of helmet safety. It's just that many young people need more convincing, and that's where Bill 209 comes into effect.

The point of this bill is not to prosecute young riders but, rather, to add legitimacy and authority to existing bicycle safety initiatives. Everyone learns about helmet safety through different communication channels, from safety demonstrations in schools to parents insisting their children wear helmets. Bill 209 promotes more education by raising awareness for helmet safety and includes the police to add incentive for young people to wear helmets. I think it is crucial that Bill 209 focuses attention on young people and especially children, as they may not necessarily know the benefits of helmets, nor do they have a grasp of the consequences of riding without one. As a former police officer that has dealt with this issue directly I cannot stress the importance of adding the mere mention of the law as an influential tool.

Albertans are able to use several education programs that promote bicycle safety with a great deal of success. As a result of these programs, I believe that the messages promoting bicycle safety have been driven home. Parents know children need protection and that helmets are the most effective way to prevent injuries. Bill 209 will continue to convince more children to listen to safety messages from government, bicycle safety advocates, and parents. More young people will be convinced to wear a helmet because they are breaking the law by riding unprotected.

I don't think policing agencies across the province will have to write numerous tickets to effectively get a message across to young riders. I have learned through my experience that the police can be an extremely effective conduit for communicating safety to the public. Seat belt safety and jaywalking have been reduced by giving people a warning rather than a ticket. I found that the occasional warning could be effective as a friendly reminder about traffic

safety. People feel lucky to get away with a warning, and they still get the message.

Some bike riders adamantly believe that they are also a vehicle on the road and should receive a level of respect and enough room equal to other vehicles to ride safely, but they should consider the difference in power, size, and manoeuvrability between bicycles and motor vehicles. Unfortunately the people that know this the least or forget this point the most are young riders. Through my experience I have noticed that young riders tend to have an invincibility complex when it comes to riding on the street. Young riders do not know the consequences and nuances of traffic to the extent of adults. They lack the experience and education that would prepare them for riding on the street. I'd like to talk about this for a moment because it concerns the justification for this bill.

Cyclists do not have to take a mandatory course to be on the road like other vehicles nor do they have to complete formal training or an examination. I appreciate the fact that there are several classes available for riders that teach proper riding skills and rules of the road. These classes can be an effective tool to keep young riders out of dangerous situations thereby reducing the number of injuries and fatalities due to vehicle/bicycle collisions. The classes help, but we have to acknowledge that we put our children on the road on bicycles in traffic with much faster vehicles. We let our children ride in dangerous situations, situations which we cannot prevent. So we put children on busy streets not fully preparing them or educating them about the dangers of riding in traffic.

Bill 209 will help promote the importance of safety. We all know how safe helmets are. We always have. Furthermore, we all know as parents that children should wear helmets. A helmet may not protect children from a broken arm or a knee injury, but helmets dramatically reduce the chance of brain injuries, skull fractures, and other severe head trauma injuries that can lead to death. Broken bones, scrapes, and bruises do heal, but I have seen the severity of head injuries caused by bicycle accidents, and I know that head injuries cannot heal as easily as other wounds. The head is much too delicate to leave unprotected.

Some might say that Bill 209 attempts to legislate common sense and infringes on personal freedom, but this bill is not violating personal freedoms. It's putting our minds at rest. The helmet gives our children padding to help protect them from dangers on the road. The bill will also give parents another tool to help ensure that children wear their helmets. I believe that most young people recognize and respect authority. This bill will allow parents to say: wear your helmet, or you'll answer to the police. Bill 209 offers deterrents that will go a long way to reaffirm the importance of bike helmets.

I believe that bike riders that don't wear a helmet are not as safe as riders with a helmet. I think this happens for a number of reasons. First of all, courtesy and safety are not virtues of helmetless riders that dart in and out of traffic without signaling properly. In my experience those reckless cyclists are the ones that most often don't wear helmets. I think one of the biggest reasons for this is the basic disregard for the safety of themselves and others in traffic. If these people don't have enough sense to wear an inexpensive piece of plastic that will save their lives, then how will this attitude translate to other traffic laws? I've seen these riders neglect their own safety while I was a police officer, and as an RHA board member I've shared stories with my peers regarding these riders' disregard for their own well-being and the disastrous consequences that often resulted.

Mr. Speaker, think of the evolution of bicycle safety like traveling from Edmonton to Calgary. Realizing that bicycles are dangerous and that children need protection is the beginning of the journey that would take us from here to Leduc. Implementing education

programs and making helmets safer and more accessible takes us farther down the road to Red Deer. However, by passing Bill 209, the journey towards sound bicycle safety will continue past Airdrie and on to Calgary.

This bill does not have to be a be-all, fix-all piece of legislation. Rather, it is part of the bigger picture and will give concerned groups, including police, the opportunity to keep our young people safe on whatever road they choose to travel.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

MS EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the great privilege of speaking in support of Bill 209. Rather than reiterate a number of the points that have been made by colleagues on both sides of the House, I would like to recount personal experience.

Just over 30 years ago the brightest and most beautiful of my cousins was killed on a bicycle. He was exiting a highway from a place near to his home in Orillia, Ontario. No doubt there would be many things that could be analyzed to see whether or not he would have been saved had he worn a helmet. It was a double tragedy, because not only was he killed, but he was killed by a hit-and-run driver, and the young man who came to assist him from across the road was also killed. It was a tragic day for our family, and ever since it has been hard for me to speak on the helmet issue because I can't help but remember a young man who had so much to live for and who had so much to give that was wasted that day.

But I'd like to bring more in focus a recent letter that was referenced by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, which perhaps identifies better than I could why we should pass this bill today. The woman, Kathy Hall, and her husband, Craig, write an appreciative letter in the *This Week* Friday, May 11, newspaper. Predominantly they cite their feelings about coming home after work and finding a broken helmet at the back door and wondering what had happened to their son.

5:10

In the story and body of the letter it states that the outcome was very positive because, Devin, the son, was found at the hospital and had been well taken care of. For the record I'm going to conclude with a couple of the remarks that she made.

And for you, young invincible people who do not wear helmets, I would like to show you my son's broken helmet. The large crack in it would have been in my son's skull. The helmet was the only reason I was able to bring Devin home that day.

Thank you to a very caring community.

Mr. Speaker, we can look at statistics and we can talk about the opportunity to make things safer for young people. The bottom line is that we on all sides of the House should ask ourselves this question: if we could do one thing to save a child, to save our neighbour's child, our own child, or a grandchild in future, would it not be to provide them every opportunity to feel safe and in actual fact be safer? The very wearing of a helmet reminds the young person that they are not invincible, that they have to wear protection and have to obey certain rules in order to have the privilege of riding a bicycle. It would appear to me that it's important to do this for the safety of children.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: Under Standing Order 8(5)(a) we have five minutes now for the sponsor of the private member's public bill to close the debate.

I now call on the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross to close debate on Bill 209.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to close debate today on Bill 209. I'd like to begin by saying that I sincerely appreciate the supportive debate of my colleagues in the Legislature today, and that is because there is no question that the prevention strategy of Bill 209 will assist with decreasing head and brain injuries through the use of properly wearing a helmet and will thereby assist with the sustainability of our health care system.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that creating health through prevention requires making a paradigm shift to a new way of thinking. It is realizing that each of us, including our children and teens, has conscious input into our state of health through choosing safe practices when engaging in a high-risk activity. I believe our legislation and policies must reflect our vision as legislators and that our health and wellness goal of injury prevention can be achieved.

I ask all of my colleagues for their support of Bill 209, and I call for the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:14 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

For the motion:

Abbott	Hancock	Norris
Blakeman	Hlady	O'Neill
Bonner	Horner	Ouellette
Cao	Hutton	Pham
Carlson	Jablonski	Rathgeber
Cenaiko	Kryczka	Renner
DeLong	Lord	Stevens
Doerksen	Lougheed	Strang
Evans	MacDonald	Tannas
Forsyth	Magnus	Tarchuk
Fritz	Mar	VanderBurg
Gordon	Masyk	Zwozdesky
Graydon	Nicol	

Against the motion:

Danyluk	Jacobs	Melchin
Fischer	Marz	Snelgrove
Friedel	McFarland	Vandermeer
Haley		

Totals: For – 38 Against – 10

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a second time]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we call it 5:30 and that when we reconvene tonight at 8 o'clock, we do so in Committee of the Whole.

THE SPEAKER: On the motion put forward by the hon. Deputy Government House Leader, would all hon. members in favour please say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE SPEAKER: Opposed, please say no. The motion is carried.

[Pursuant to Standing Order 4 the Assembly adjourned at 5:28 p.m.]

