

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, November 28, 2001**

1:30 p.m.

Date: 01/11/28

[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O God, grant that we the members of our province's Legislature may fulfill our office with honesty and integrity. May our first concern be for the good of all our people. Guide our deliberations this day. Amen.

Please be seated.

head: Introduction of Visitors

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mr. Chornovil, Member of Parliament of Ukraine and member of the Committee for the State and the Development of Local and Provincial Government. I would like to welcome Mr. Chornovil and his colleagues: Ms Kravets, head specialist, Ministry of Economics; Mr. Kononenko, deputy head of Sviatoshyn regional government administration; and Mr. Voronin, head of the Secretariat Committee for Government Building, Municipal Self-Government, and Council Activity.

Our friends from Ukraine are visiting Alberta on their official visit under phase 2 of the CIDA-funded Canada/Ukraine legislative and intergovernmental project. This project advances legislative development in Ukraine, which is striving to become more market orientated and grow its economy. Our guests today have come to Alberta to examine Canadian federal/provincial relations, fiscal federalism, and municipal government. At this time I'd like to ask our honoured guests to now please rise in the Speaker's gallery and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table a petition signed by 447 Albertans urging "the Government of Alberta to provide health care coverage for medical supplies for diabetic children . . . financial assistance to their parents to enable them to meet their children's necessary dietary requirements and cover costs incurred in traveling to Diabetes Education and Treatment Centres." A total of 1,447 Albertans have so far signed this petition.

Thank you.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Finance.

MRS. NELSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the provincial judges and masters in chambers pension plan annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2000. This is pursuant to section 5 of the provincial judges and masters in chambers pension plan regulation Alberta No. 265/88. Members who would like a copy of this annual report can obtain a copy from my office.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table the required number of copies of the annual report for 2001 of the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. As all members know, this is a very active council that works very hard to present issues related to our disability community, and I want to thank our chairperson of that particular council, the hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan, for his stellar stewardship as well as our own Premier for his good guidance in this regard.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Government Services.

MR. COUTTS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last spring the Premier asked Government Services to study the issue of lobbyist registration, and today I'm pleased to table five copies of that research report. As we committed, the report identifies what's being done in other provinces and federally on lobbyist registration, the cost of the bureaucracy needed to run such a registry, and on the basis of those factors whether or not a lobbyist registry should be established in Alberta.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

MR. BOUTILIER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. Pursuant to Standing Order 37(1) it's my pleasure to table the requisite number of copies of the Safety Codes Council 2000 annual report. The council, of course, is a valued partner of this government and of Municipal Affairs. It works to ensure the safety of all Albertans.

My second tabling today is pursuant to Standing Order 37(3). I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of a letter I sent to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry in response to his good questions of November 27 on public consultation relative to objective-based building codes and the good work we're doing in partnership with the National Research Council.

MR. DUCHARME: M. le Président, il me fait grand plaisir de déposer cinq copies de la Charte du Jeune Citoyen Francophone du 21^e Siècle, créée par 85 étudiants provenant d'une quarantaine d'états et de gouvernements de la Francophonie réunis à l'Assemblée nationale du Québec pour le premier Parlement Francophone des Jeunes en juillet dernier. Cette charte s'articule autour de cinq grands thèmes: l'éducation, la santé, et les questions sociales; la culture, la communication, et la nouvelle technologie; les libertés fondamentales et la démocratie; la prévention des conflits; et l'environnement.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to table five copies of the Charter of the Young Francophone Citizen of the 21st Century, created by 85 students from 40 Francophone states and governments meeting at the Quebec National Assembly last July for the first Francophone Youth Parliament. This charter centres around five main themes: education, health, and social questions; culture, communication, and new technologies; fundamental liberties and democracy; prevention of conflicts; and the environment.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of a letter sent to the Minister of Transportation and copied to the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert and to me, authored by the mayor and council of the city of St. Albert, endorsing the St. Albert RCMP Community Advisory Committee's

resolution that asks the government to put in place regulations under the Traffic Safety Act making the wearing of approved bicycle helmets mandatory for bicyclists of all ages.

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

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table five copies of an information sheet prepared by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters that informs us that over 9,000 abused women did not receive shelter services last year.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a brochure from the Mill Woods Welcome Centre for Immigrants. They had an open house celebrating their new location and paying tribute to their volunteers on Friday, November 23, 2001.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the appropriate number of copies of the fall newsletter from the Terra Association, which is a very good, hardworking association in my riding for young mothers and teen mothers. It's outlining their new family literacy program and their services for young fathers.

Thank you very much.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With your permission I have three tablings today. The first is an open letter representing 48 principals in Beaumont, Calmar, Devon, Leduc, New Sarepta, Thorsby, and Warburg in part indicating that parents are often required to fund-raise to maintain libraries, purchase new equipment, and provide important learning opportunities for students.

My second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is the licensing information put out by the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission.

My final tabling is 41 requests from Albertans who want to urge the government to vote in favour of the class size targets bill, to "end the need for parents to fundraise for classroom basics," and to "ensure that Alberta can attract and keep the best teachers."

Thank you.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the required number of copies of 40 requests from Albertans who want the government to vote in support of the Liberal opposition's class size targets bill "so that classrooms will no longer be overcrowded," to "end the need for parents to fundraise for classroom basics," and to "ensure that Alberta can attract and keep the best teachers for our children."

Thank you.

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

1:40

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first one is a letter, an e-mail, from Natasha Wiebe of the department of pediatrics at the University of Alberta suggesting that the Ministry of Children's Services' cuts are breaking faith with the families it serves.

The second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is a news release from the

Edmonton Aboriginal Coalition for Children and Families. This coalition is organizing a community public meeting on November 29 at 9:30 in the morning at the Canadian Native Friendship Centre, which is located at 11205-101st Street.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. The first is a letter addressed to all MLAs from Penny Davis, RN and bachelor of science in nursing, where she urges all members to support Bill 209, and she goes on to say that this is extremely important, that the safety of our children is worth it.

The second tabling is from a teacher that wrote to me, and he goes on to say that he is very concerned over

the Conservative Government's apathy with regard to teacher's concerns over education funding. I know I speak for a great many of my colleagues when I say that I'm feeling extremely undervalued, underpaid and ignored. I am very concerned that the Government is underestimating the level of commitment that teachers are feeling as we enter into a potentially volatile contract year.

Thank you very much.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Leduc. Happy birthday.

MR. KLAPSTEIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislature three visitors from the constituency of Leduc who have come to see their Legislature in operation. They are Paul Cissell, Leroy Paulson, and Andre Sirois, and I'd ask the House to extend to them the traditional warm greeting.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to introduce 43 special guests from Whitecourt-St. Anne, 35 students from the Grasmere school accompanied by three teachers: Mrs. Hansen, Mrs. Brayford, and Mrs. VandenBiggelaar. There are five helpers: Mrs. Renz, Mrs. Ehrenholz, Mrs. Tiedeman, Mrs. Schroeder, and Mrs. Jacques. I'd ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House 96 constituents who are visiting us from St. Albert's Muriel Martin school. Three teachers, 14 parent helpers, and 79 students are a great example of why Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert is one of the best constituencies in the province. These bright, energetic students participated in your Christmas decorating program this morning and are accompanied by three teachers, Mrs. Kane, Mrs. Boyd, and Miss Griffiths, and fourteen parent helpers: Cathy McLelland, Marion Jasinski, Chris Patterson, Cynthia Olson, Pamela Radford, Mark Brown, Sandy Graveline, Jason Wood, Mrs. Olson, Mrs. Chies, Mr. Born, Mrs. Hart, Mrs. Schimpf, and Mrs. Joshi. They are seated in both galleries, and I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

MR. DUCHARME: M. le President, j'ai le plaisir de vous presenter

ainsi qu' à l'Assemblée Legislative M. Marc-Andre Vincent, étudiant à l'école Maurice-Lavallee d'Edmonton. Marc-Andre fut choisi pour représenter l'Alberta à la première rencontre du Parlement Francophone des Jeunes, qui a eu lieu en juillet dernier au Québec. Marc-Andre faisait partie de l'équipe responsable pour la rédaction de la Charte que j'ai déposée à la table il y a quelques minutes.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly Mr. Marc-Andre Vincent, student at Maurice-Lavallee school in Edmonton. Marc-Andre was selected to represent Alberta at the first meeting of the Francophone Youth Parliament, which took place this past summer. Marc-Andre was part of the team responsible for drafting the charter which I tabled earlier today. Marc-Andre is seated in the members' gallery, and I'd ask that he please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to introduce two very special friends who are in your gallery this afternoon, and in doing so, I want to thank the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose for allowing me this privilege to introduce two long-standing friends who are accompanying our special delegation from Ukraine. They are, first of all, Mr. Jim Jacuta, who does a yeoman's job working at the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at our university, and the second is Yuri Loutsenko, who is providing interpretive services. [remarks in Ukrainian]

I welcome you both along with all the special guests who are with you from Ukraine. I greet you warmly. [as submitted]

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

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Dr. Jacob Ross, who I believe is seated in the visitors' gallery. Dr. Ross is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Perinatal Research Centre at the University of Alberta. He comes to the University of Alberta from Adelaide, Australia. He is one of the many distinguished scholars attracted to the University of Alberta, many of whom I have the distinct honour of representing in this Assembly. I would ask Dr. Ross to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. MASON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Mrs. Patricia Gordon. Mrs. Gordon is here to observe the working of the Assembly and the contributions her granddaughter is making to its operation. Mrs. Gordon is the grandmother of Maya Gordon, a page of the Assembly. Mrs. Gordon is seated in the members' gallery. I would now ask Mrs. Gordon to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly two excellent volunteers in the community of St. Albert. They are Heather and Gareth Jones. Gareth is also a member of the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

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

Gaming Revenue for Children's Services

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government relies on gaming revenue to fund essential services. Given that this is the case, we would expect that all essential programs are given their fair share of gaming revenue, but according to this year's budget figures some programs are more essential than others. My question is to the Minister of Gaming. Why did the racing industry renewal program receive 18 times more funding than the fetal alcohol initiative?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. STEVENS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to say that in Alberta we have a unique model where all gaming revenue goes into the Alberta lottery fund, and that Alberta lottery fund is used for the benefit of our communities through charities, not-for-profit organizations, and also for public initiatives. Each spring we vote on the lottery estimate, and it is through that vote that it is determined whether the money will go to charitable foundations or whether it will go to public initiatives.

MS CARLSON: To the Minister of Gaming: why did the Calgary Stampede receive seven times more revenue than the entire Children's Services department?

MR. STEVENS: The Alberta lottery fund as it relates to public initiatives is not to be used for operational matters but, rather, to be used for capital. So if you take an analysis of each of the ministries which receive funding, you will find that there are specific projects under each ministry which are to have the money spent on them and those projects only. The one exception that I can think of is relative to the Ministry of Health and Wellness, where through the Alberta lottery fund we fund AADAC's budget in its entirety, which includes operational funding.

1:50

MRS. NELSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, I feel compelled to supplement the answer. In the hon. member's question she left the impression that Children's Services had not received its fair share of budget dollars in this fiscal plan. Quite clearly, Children's Services in the overall budget received \$648 million in funding. The Calgary Stampede through lottery allocations received I believe it was \$7.1 million. So, please, let's not play that game; that's not fair.

MS CARLSON: We're talking about lottery funding to Children's Services, and that minister heard the question.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Children's Services then: how does this minister defend a policy that chooses to fund horses over children in need?

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, quite frankly, programs like fetal alcohol syndrome do not use capital dollars. Some of the prerequisites for funding are quite different. If in fact the hon. member is concerned that we should be exploring dollars from gaming revenues or liquor revenues to fund programs, we're currently reviewing a program in Manitoba, where they are looking at the dollar revenue possibilities from the sale of liquor. I believe they've already enacted a program. We're going to look at the results of that program. We've had a lot of willingness from partners that are

distributing alcohol throughout Alberta, through the bottling agencies and so on, to get involved in the program.

There has been no request specifically for lottery funding for Children's Services because we've been receiving funds from general revenue and have not made it a target for revenues for any particular area.

MRS. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, once again I have to get up. The hon. member across has made an innuendo that is an unwarranted assertion as to the government's priorities, and I would ask her to withdraw that, because she knows perfectly well that we have put a main focus on Children's Services by being one of the few governments that I'm aware of that has a full department that is focused on children's services in addition to our support for families in addition to our support for aboriginal children. To indicate through innuendo that there's any priority that is different is unwarranted, and I would ask her to withdraw that and do the right thing.

THE SPEAKER: Second Official Opposition main question. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

School Fund-raising

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents are working casinos to raise funds for schools. The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission rules state that casino proceeds may be used for "providing equipment, supplies or programs to educate students. Not included are social or recreational activities." My first question is to the Minister of Gaming. Will the minister confirm that schools buying textbooks, mathematics equipment, and library books have done so under this provision?

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I think it's important to understand that we have a unique model in the province of Alberta. It's called a charitable model. The casinos and bingos are operated by charities through licences granted by the AGLC, and each year, as a result of the charitable model, some \$171 million is provided to charity for good works in our communities throughout the province. Some of those groups are without a doubt school advisory groups. They make application and are granted licences.

I would refer the matter to the hon. Minister of Learning, who has on a regular basis commented on the appropriateness of using funds for textbooks.

DR. OBERG: Again, Mr. Speaker, I don't want to delay the Assembly here. That question has been answered numerous times. They are not allowed to use the money for textbooks. The Alberta School Boards Association has said no. When it comes to the Edmonton public school board, they've said no. I've said no, and the school boards have said no.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. Then my question is to the Minister of Learning, Mr. Speaker. Given that school-run casinos can only fund education programs, why does the minister stand by his claim that parents are only fund-raising for extras?

DR. OBERG: Well, Mr. Speaker, if these regulations do say that, then obviously the regulations need to be taken a look at. That's what this government is there for, to take a look at regulations such as this.

The bottom line is that they are to be used for extras. Casino-

derived revenues can be used for things such as school uniforms, trips to Europe, band trips, all these other types of things. They're not to be used for the core supplies of schools. Unfortunately, that's the way it is.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. MASSEY: Thank you. My final question is to the Minister of Learning, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister's promised review of school financing result in a formula that ensures that parents need only fund-raise for what he calls the extras?

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, that is what is occurring now, or that is what is supposed to occur right now. Certainly anything that we do with regards to funding on the funding formula will be consistent with that, so I have no problems at all with agreeing to that.

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

Implementation of Auditor General's Recommendations

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In his latest report the Auditor General said that "the Department of Health and Wellness has not made adequate progress in implementing past recommendations." The Auditor General points out that he doesn't believe management is ignoring his recommendations; however, he calls their progress "unsatisfactory." My questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Is the minister aware of any impediments in his department that prevent it from implementing the Auditor General's recommendations?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, let me say at the outset that we have a great deal of time and respect for the Auditor General of the province of Alberta, who has made a number of constructive comments not only on the operations of the Department of Health and Wellness but other departments as well. We are endeavouring to move forward on some of his recommendations. Some of them are not as easy to implement as others. So our progress on some has been immediate. Indeed, of the recommendations made by the AG a number have already been implemented, but there are others.

One that comes to mind immediately is determining the value of the services that we pay for with physicians, as an example. This is a very complicated matter that will require not just a change in government policy but perhaps a change to the contract that is negotiated with physicians in the province of Alberta. That clearly is not something that is entirely within the ability of the government to change on its own. It will require the co-operation of stakeholders. There are, I should say, other recommendations that fall into that type of category.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Auditor General has said that "the challenge is to get senior people to invest time, effort, and personal commitment," can the minister tell the House why this is a challenge for his senior people?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I don't see any reason why we should be standing on the floor of this Legislature besmirching the reputation of our senior staff in the Department of Health and Wellness. They are extremely dedicated, hardworking, committed individuals, and I see no reason why we should make a disparaging remark.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's simply in the Auditor General's report.

Is the minister prepared to implement all of the Auditor General's recommendations before implementing recommendations from the Premier's advisory council?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated our willingness to move forward on many of the recommendations made by the Auditor General. I'm advised by the provincial Minister of Finance that we will be soon tabling our overall government response to the recommendations made by the AG. Again, good recommendations that are constructive, and we will move forward on them.

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

Children's Services Funding

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The cuts to children's services that we know about so far may only be the tip of the iceberg. Provincewide the cuts that we do know about total only a few million dollars while the projected deficit for children's services across the province is at least \$40 million. It's clear that many more cuts to children's services will be necessary to make up this shortfall. To the Minister of Children's Services: can the minister confirm that in fact more cuts to programs for children's services will be necessary in order to make up the full approximately \$40 million that has to be cut?

2:00

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge all authorities were to provide their cost-containment strategies to the deputy minister by November 23. We have received in some considerable detail all of those estimates from the authorities, and I don't anticipate any further reductions. I'd just qualify my answer this way. There may be some people in programs further away from the child that do not know or have not yet had the communication about some particular dollar figure.

If I could just make one observation, all of the authorities were alerted as early as August that we were going to be in a cost-containment mode because of some anticipated deficit dollars, so we had been working with them. In some cases, such as in MâMôwe, there was a letter sent out to each one of the agencies, 140 some odd contract agencies in all, 93 of which were involved in early intervention projects. Mr. Speaker, to the best of my knowledge all agencies, all individuals, all programs should now know what their dollar figure targets are.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, can the minister indicate to the Assembly the total dollar value of the cuts made to programs in her department so far?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to table a document that illustrates that, perhaps even before the end of this question period today. I have a breakout of that on the basis of each individual authority. The Department of Children's Services has made a reduction of some \$7 million, so we will be able to provide that and would be pleased to give the hon. member some details.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, will the minister assure the Assembly that there will be no further cuts to children's programs in her department in this budget year?

MS EVANS: You know, Mr. Speaker, I think there's a lot of temerity, and that's natural. When we're making changes, people are concerned, and indeed so am I. But I'd like to reference something from *Hearthstone* that has come to me from one of our hon. members, which example has been put in the newspaper. It quotes the CEO Jon Reeves as stating that there were \$68,000 worth of reductions within their region, that they will be able to meet their targets fairly, and that there have been no allusions to more cuts.

Mr. Speaker, unless the sky falls in Alberta and there's immediate change that all of us will be fully aware of and acknowledging, I don't anticipate more change, but I do not have a crystal ball that tells me exactly what our revenue picture will look like next week or next month or early next year. I am doing my best with what we've got, and so are all of the authorities.

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

Children's Advocate

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children who are at risk or in need of protection are of special concern to all Albertans. Although there will never be a government program or service that can replace the loving care of parents, there are many caring people in the Children's Services system that do their very best to care for these children in need. My question is for the Minister of Children's Services. Can the minister tell the House what she is doing to address concerns raised in the recent Children's Advocate report?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the advocate's report for the year 2000-2001 raised some very serious issues because of anecdotal references made in consultations and meetings held in five centres on five different dates in communities in Alberta. Specifically those cases, over 186 in all, were individual children who had either been referenced or reference made to. We have investigated every single one of those circumstances and have released a nonidentifiable report; in other words, not showing each child by identity but showing what the investigation entailed. That investigation and the follow-up has been taken very seriously not only by the authorities themselves but by other authorities such as the police, in some situations, and the advocate as well. We are satisfied that we have followed up on that report.

The second part of my answer would be that during this Child Welfare Act review with the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, we will be looking at recommendations from the Chan Durrant report about what type of advocacy model should be in place and listening to Albertans through their responses on the discussion guide and through other submissions that will be made to the hon. member in the review of the Child Welfare Act.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also to the Minister of Children's Services: are you taking any action as to the role of the Children's Advocate at this time?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, beyond what I have currently suggested, there's nothing in place at this time that has changed at all. We have had an Acting Children's Advocate in place, especially while we go through this consultation, making sure that we get all of the thoughts and views of Albertans. We're looking at some other changes that are systemwide in concert with that. At the time the advocate's role was put in place and at the time of the Chan Durrant review, many

people were suggesting other roles for other people in the system as advocates. One example is that we used to centralize the child welfare director. Now there are child welfare directors in each of the individual authorities.

One anomaly that I have discovered in the review of the Children's Advocate report is that frequently not all parties who should be advocating on behalf of the child were on the same wavelength at the same time. We need to ensure that the child welfare director is directly accountable for the work done on behalf of that child and that any advocacy about any anomaly that'll occur to the child in the system or anywhere else, as a matter of fact, would be reported to that director at that time. So there are a number of things we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Mr. Speaker, my final question is to the same minister. The minister has stated that her department is reviewing specific cases that were cited in the Children's Advocate report. Has that internal review been completed?

MS EVANS: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

Day Care Workers

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Children's Services has forgotten about the children and those that care for them. My questions this afternoon are to the Minister of Children's Services. Seven months ago the minister said that the Cleland report on day care workers' salaries was not yet ready to be tabled. Is it ready today?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, the first phase of that report that examined the day care workers and day cares themselves has been done. This report has not been completed, however, because we are now looking at the emerging issue that arose with family day homes. This was another part that we discovered when we went out talking to the day care workers and to the people throughout the communities of Alberta. They pointed out and cited quite properly that over 6,000 children in Alberta were looked after in family day homes and wondered, if we were going to make changes to any part of the system, if we would look at yet another part of the system.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: with the mandatory 1 percent cutback this year and who knows what next year, will the minister have any money to be able to act upon the recommendations of the Cleland report and provide a salary increase to the day care workers in this province?

Thank you.

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, we are in the midst of planning for our business plan presentation at our standing policy committee. At such time as I can divulge that to this House, I will so do. Let me be very clear though. On the matter of early intervention and early childhood development we have taken on the task of planning for several programs which we believe will certainly and clearly benefit the children whether they are low-risk or high-risk children, whether they are in day cares or universally throughout any community of Alberta.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister: how can we have among the lowest salaries for day care workers in Canada when the 2000-2001 Children's Services annual report shows that \$2.4 million dedicated for supporting day cares went unspent? Why couldn't you have put that into the pool of money for the child care workers, the day care workers? Why not?

2:10

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, oversimplification would be an answer to that question. There are many components to the situation of day care supports through supports to families. I think quite clearly that the targets we have had are the programs for those children that are most in need. When we did do some of the data collection, in reference to the Cleland report, we found out that throughout Alberta some of the profit-making day cares had dissolved and that nonprofit groups had come together and done exemplary jobs of providing day care and day care supports for their children.

One additional thing in the context of the low-income review. We have been talking to the people that have been working on that report, with the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment, and some of these things will tie in very nicely together when we bring out our report in due course.

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

Lobbyist Registry

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the hon. Minister of Government Services. Now that the report on a lobbyist registry has been tabled, can the hon. minister tell the House if this government plans to proceed with a registry?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. COUTTS: Certainly, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is correct. After studying the lobbyist registries in other jurisdictions, it's clear that such a registry is not needed in Alberta today. So the answer simply is no. This government will not be proceeding with a lobbyist registry.

Presently, Mr. Speaker, there are two lobbyist registries operating in Canada, one in the province of Ontario and one federally. British Columbia and Nova Scotia have just come on with new legislation to establish lobbyist registries. However, in all four of those cases our research has shown that those registries are being set up in climates where an existing government is trying to provide stability and public trust that has been eroded by the previous governments. Those levels of concern simply do not exist here in Alberta today, so it's strictly a public relations move on behalf of those governments.

When you take a look at the \$300,000 or \$400,000 that's required to set one up and set up a bureaucracy to operate the registry, to run it for one year, we don't think that that cost is warranted at this time. That cost does not even come close to making sure that compliance and enforcement are looked after, so the costs could be much greater in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BRODA: Thank you. To the same minister, Mr. Speaker: can the hon. minister better explain why a lobbyist registry would not be effective?

MR. COUTTS: Well, Mr. Speaker, we seriously considered, for

example, the concerns that were raised in this House last spring around a particular incident that happened last year, and we determined that a lobbyist registry would not have uncovered that particular situation. Even though a registry requires lobbyists to register and provide general information on their activities, it would not catch illegal acts between lobbyists and public officeholders. As well, under the definition currently being used in existing registries, only individuals or organizations that spent a significant proportion of their time and work on lobbyist activities would be required to register, so registries do not cover onetime lobbyist incidents. The operating records of existing lobbyist registries show quite simply that they are not capable of deferring illegal activity or enforcing registry requirements that are already in place.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question to the same minister: can the minister explain, then, how a report from 1996 can recommend a registry, yet this report can arrive at a totally different conclusion?

THE SPEAKER: That strikes me that a lot of opinion is involved in that, Mr. Minister.

MR. COUTTS: Well, the research that was put in certainly did help form some of our opinions, but the research was based on what is actually happening in these other jurisdictions. It's interesting to point out that since 1986 there haven't been any prosecutions in the federal system, and there is evidence of widespread noncompliance in the registry system. So the fact is that we have had enough information that raised the red flags to say that although other reports have indicated that we should have lobbyist registries in the province, the evidence in our research shows that it is not needed at this time.

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

Driver Testing for Seniors

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently physicians may require seniors to go for special mandatory driver testing if the physician feels the senior may no longer be capable of driving safely. The physician could refer the senior to the private Drive-able program just as he would for a CAT scan, an MRI, or lab work except that the fee, over \$200 with tax, is not covered by Alberta Health, and the minister of health in correspondence with an Edmonton senior has referred the issue to the Minister of Transportation. So my question is to the Minister of Transportation. Considering that his department publicly acknowledged on August 1, 2000, that it was considering paying for these tests, why has there been no decision in the last 15 months?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister.

MR. STELMACH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member across the way is identifying an issue that's becoming more prevalent right across Canada, and that is that as our population ages, we have more and more people that are wanting to retain their driver's licence at a time when maybe family members are concerned about the safety of their parents. I would inform the House that one of the most difficult issues is to try and find some balance between the safety of the traveling public, the issues centered around the family with the senior, the registry agents, and also the police.

MS BLAKEMAN: There was no answer.

Since seniors are being forced to take this test for medical scrutiny, is it not unfair for the government to charge them for the medical component of this test over and above the actual driving component that any other driver would have to pay?

THE SPEAKER: Well, again, we're searching for opinions again, hon. minister.

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inform the House that if any one of us has a class 1 driver's licence, the regulations require an annual medical checkup. The government doesn't pay for that particular medical. The person who has the privilege of that driver's licence pays for the medical. For anyone that wants to retain the privilege of owning a driver's licence, there are some obligations; there are some rules that we have to meet. But they're all centred on ensuring the safety of the traveling motoring public.

MS BLAKEMAN: Is the minister not worried about some cases where physicians may not require seniors to take the test because they know the financial strain that it could place on the seniors? How does that put us ahead?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, I believe the member is asking more for an opinion as opposed to government policy.

Cloning of Human Beings

MR. LUKASZUK: Following the recent line of questioning, Mr. Speaker, my question may suggest a way to double the opposition caucus size.

Mr. Speaker, on a serious note recent news reports confirm that scientists now have the ability of cloning human beings. Many people have expressed concerns at the serious ethical dilemma this development in science imposes. My question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister tell us if he will propose any legislation to deal with this serious issue?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, it is clear that the cloning of human beings is an issue that is recognized as a matter of major significance on a number of different levels. At present the federal government is taking the lead on this particular issue, and on the 3rd of May of this year the federal Minister of Health tabled the assisted human reproduction act. This act was tabled for consultation purposes. It is clear in this act tabled by the federal minister that there is a prohibition on human cloning. The bill also has provisions that allow for the delegating of responsibilities to a province with equivalent laws.

2:20

Mr. Speaker, I am advised that the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health has been asked to provide its views on this particular bill by January 2002. The province of Alberta has been asked for its input, and we obviously have concerns with the legislation. We are working with our counterparts in other provinces and territories throughout Canada to improve the bill from a provincial perspective, but at this time my department will also closely monitor this issue to determine if, in fact, there is a need to move forward on provincial legislation, if required.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. LUKASZUK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My second and last supplemental to the Minister of Innovation and Science: since there

is, as the minister has indicated, no legislation in place at this time, what precautions are in place to ensure that ethical practices are followed on research that currently takes place in Alberta?

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, this is a very important question. Even though the legislation is not yet in place in Canada, there are other safeguards in place to ensure ethical research. In fact, all across Canada and Alberta strict ethical guidelines and review processes are part of any research involving human subjects. No research can receive public funding unless it has been shown to meet the ethical review process in the tricouncil policy statement.

The tricouncil policy statement on research involving humans was put together in 1998 by the Medical Research Council, which is now known as the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. In this, it expresses the continuing commitment of the three councils on medical, social, and natural sciences to the people of Canada to promote the ethical conduct of research involving humans.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you very much, hon. minister. There is as part of the Routine something called Ministerial Statements.

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

Rebuilt Air Bags in Automobiles

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Transportation: does the minister support Quebec's call for a nationwide ban on rebuilt air bags in automobiles?

MR. STELMACH: Did he say airplanes or automobiles? I never heard the question.

THE SPEAKER: Well, actually, the House was rather quiet at the time. The question had to do with air bags.

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, I must apologize. I heard air bags. Then one person said windbags. I'm not quite sure what he was asking for.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, please.

MR. BONNER: To repeat the question, Mr. Speaker?

THE SPEAKER: Please proceed. We have now spent a minute.

MR. BONNER: Thank you. My question to the minister was: does the minister support Quebec's call for a nationwide ban on rebuilt air bags in automobiles?

MR. STELMACH: We are looking at the information that's coming forward from a number of organizations that are quite knowledgeable in this area and will be making a determination on the information as it comes forward.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BONNER: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: is the minister planning any type of public education campaign to let Albertans know about the concerns regarding rebuilt air bags?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, we have a number of organizations that partner with Alberta Transportation in terms of traffic safety and

all of the issues related to repair of equipment or automobiles following accidents and also many of the issues related to highway traffic safety. I will endeavour to just check with some of the organizations, like AMA, and see what their position is on it.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. BONNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: will the minister be creating regulations to protect Albertans from rebuilt air bags?

MR. STELMACH: Mr. Speaker, we don't build regulations in isolation from the other provinces. Any regulations that come forward in this particular area are done in partnership with the federal government and all of the provinces. It could be done through the Council of Motor Transport Administrators or all of the other individuals that are involved in doing regulations for various areas centred around not only the safety equipment on motor vehicles but also the actual construction of trucks or cars that we use on our highways.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, followed by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mazankowski Report

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans were subjected to a multimillion dollar advertising blitz two years ago during the debate over Bill 11. The government used taxpayer dollars to outspend the bill's opponents at least 10 to 1. It now appears that the government is once again preparing to take its expensive PR machinery out of the hangar to sell Albertans on the dubious propositions that are no doubt contained in the Mazankowski report. All of my questions are to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Why is the government preparing to spend millions of dollars to convince Albertans of the merits of user-pay health care while simultaneously cutting millions from programs benefiting disadvantaged children? What kind of warped priorities are these?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that we spend a considerable amount of money on health care in the province of Alberta: \$6.4 billion. I should further note that the hon. member does not appear to be able to frame a question without besmirching the reputation of a fine person like Don Mazankowski. I should further note . . . [interjections]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. minister has the floor.

MR. MAR: I should further note, Mr. Speaker, that the hon. member does not appear to be able to get his own facts straight on a number of occasions. We know that between him and his colleague who sits to his left, his far left perhaps – between the two of them they are not able to do a sufficient amount of research to provide us with a question on government policy as opposed to mere insinuation. Really there is very little that can be answered in this question. The quality of the response must necessarily be governed by the quality of the question.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Minister of Health and Wellness needs to feel better than he is doing now.

THE SPEAKER: Let's get to the question.

DR. PANNU: Given that the Tory caucus is being given an advance briefing on the Mazankowski report tomorrow, will the minister extend the same courtesy to opposition members, and if not, why not?

MR. MAR: The purpose of question period, which has been stated by you on a number of occasions and has been understood by most members of the Assembly, is to ask questions about government policy, Mr. Speaker. It is not to answer questions about how a caucus works. We certainly do not want to know how their caucus works. The matters that go on within our caucus are not matters of government policy that are the proper subject matter of question period.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just wonder if the Premier's council is a government body or not.

Why does the government believe that the recommendations in the Mazankowski report will actually save dollars in health care when it is authored by the same person who as federal Finance minister racked up the biggest budget deficit in the history of this country?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-West, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Palliative Care

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my work I hear and read about the increasing public awareness of our aging population and its impact on Alberta society. We have recently heard in this Chamber a certain amount of discussion around the issue of palliative care in Alberta. All of us have known someone who is terminally ill. My first question is to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister tell us exactly what palliative care involves?

2:30

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, earlier this week the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview also asked a question about palliative care, and at that time I did outline in broad-stroke terms what palliative care is. It is a term that we use for the type of care that our health system offers for people who are terminally ill. As the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the hon. Member for Calgary-West know, palliative care is active, it is also particularly compassionate, and it focuses on the quality of life of an individual who is dying and also the quality of life of that person's family. In the province of Alberta palliative care includes therapeutic and supportive services. These services are designed to meet not only the physical but also the spiritual, psychological, and social needs of the person and their family. It's for that reason that the provincial government considers palliative care a core health care service in our province, and we will continue to provide it on that basis.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my second question is also to the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister tell us how palliative care services are delivered in Alberta?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, regional health authorities in the province are responsible for delivering palliative care services in Alberta.

Each region can differ with respect to the manner in which it is delivered. It is for that reason that we ask regional health authorities to determine their own needs within their jurisdictions and gear their programs accordingly.

As an example, Mr. Speaker, the Calgary health region has devoted considerable resources to delivering more palliative care services in the homes of those suffering from terminal illness. I should say that palliative care can take place in a number of different settings. It could be in acute care facilities, long-term care facilities, at home, or in hospices. In the case of the Capital health authority, they have instead chosen to invest their dollars devoted to palliative care in subsidizing the cost of patients for some of their palliative care accommodation charges. That is the reason why there is regional difference in the cost in each different region.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, my third and final question is also for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Can the minister tell us what Alberta is doing to improve palliative care services in the province?

MR. MAR: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a matter where we can have some amount of pride in the work that we've done to improve palliative care. As an example, we've changed the home care regulation to exempt palliative care patients from the \$3,000 limit for home care services that would normally apply. In 1999 we implemented a \$3 million palliative care drug program that supports the cost of medications and allows patients to receive treatments in their homes or in a hospice or in a lodge. The department has also released a three-year action plan to implement Alberta's aging in place strategy, and part of that plan is to enhance palliative care.

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

Child and Family Services Authorities

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget cuts are threatening and disrupting the work of personnel in the Children's Services department. My questions are all to the Minister of Children's Services. Have any regional Children's Services CEOs resigned for refusing to implement budget cuts?

MS EVANS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any resignations as the hon. member has suggested.

MS CARLSON: Mr. Speaker, have regional Children's Services CEOs had their positions threatened should they fail to implement budget cuts?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, this morning I attended Public Accounts, and there was a reference in the Auditor General's report about governance. It's very clear that the governance of the authorities is with appointed and approved boards that are managing those authorities. Those boards evaluate performance, they institute policy, and they work with the CEOs and a management team where the board sets policy and works with the CEO. I have not been given any communication heretofore that anybody has felt threatened and have not any information to support providing any further answer.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: what are the consequences for CEOs should they not implement the budget cuts?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, we've got full agreement, and if I could just say that all of the authorities have agreed with signing a plan on the support of their targets. Every authority will send in signatures of all the members on their service plan. I will similarly be forwarding to our Premier and to Finance a copy of the signatures of our department officials and myself supporting that we will achieve our targets. There has been no other policy or process in place.

Women's Shelters

MR. SHARIFF: Mr. Speaker, at the request of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters I met with Ms Jan Reimer, provincial coordinator for the council. The council brochure which I tabled suggests that last year over 9,000 abused women and over 10,000 children could not be admitted to Alberta shelters. Given the upcoming holiday season, I am very concerned for the welfare of abused women and their children. My questions are to the hon. Minister of Children's Services. Could you confirm if the statistics circulated by the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters are accurate? If so, what is your ministry doing about it?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, we are very concerned about the rising incidence of women and children who are seeking shelter. We have instituted a committee and liaison with the executive director of the Council of Women's Shelters to see if we can identify the best possible manner in collecting statistics. Prior to this we were not collecting them as well as we might. I think there's a real importance in understanding that many of those statistical references are not substantiated. They are different, given different authorities' management of the system. So we are taking every one that leaves as a serious issue, hoping that they are getting proper direction. Quite frankly, some of them do not want us to know where they're going, do not want us to follow up on their behalf. We're working very hard to make sure that we manage the issue in the best way possible.

MR. SHARIFF: My supplementary is also to the same minister. According to the document I tabled earlier, is it true that women's shelters have not received an increase for their operating costs since 1985? If that's true, how can the minister justify such an omission?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, we have put increases in the budget in the last two years. Two years ago it was just over \$11 million; today it is approximately \$14 million. We had an increase again this year. Women's shelters across this province are one group of support agencies which I have suggested to all the CEOs and to the authorities we not ask for reductions during this period of cost containment because of my concern that many of those programs needed our support because of the accelerated exposure of women and children, predominantly, to family violence. The phenomenon of increase in the statistics on family violence is something that's happening Canada-wide. This is not simply an Alberta issue.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member.

MR. SHARIFF: Thank you, sir.

head: Recognitions

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

Webber Academy

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Thursday, November 22, I was very pleased to represent the province at the official opening ceremony of the new Webber Academy campus in my constituency of Calgary-West. Webber Academy opened in 1997 with an enrollment of 85 students, and the new campus opened September 4, 2001, with an enrollment of 410 students. Webber Academy is a combination of a vision for learning by Dr. Neil Webber, four-time MLA for Calgary-Bow and former minister of social services, education, and energy. The mission of Webber Academy is to prepare students to strive in university and beyond, to be accomplished by creating an environment of high expectations of achievement, behaviour, and service. Webber Academy reflects the principles of Alberta's learning system: choice, learning opportunities for future success, and focus on lifelong learning. I heartily congratulate Webber Academy and Dr. Neil Webber in particular on this significant day in the history of the academy.

Thank you.

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

2:40 Mill Woods Welcome Center for Immigrants

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to recognize the Mill Woods Welcome Center for Immigrants. For this organization the resources of Catholic Social Services, the Indo-Canadian Women's Association, and the Mennonite Center for Newcomers are combined into a multidisciplinary team which works through the Mill Woods Welcome Center for Immigrants. This team is dedicated to improving access and opportunities for immigrants through strategies that contribute to the building of the whole community. They are settlement assistance, employment strategies for foreign professionals, language and educational counseling, community development, homework club, and citizenship classes. They have been operating in this joint venture fashion for the past four years in Mill Woods and have been a welcome addition to our community.

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

Lindsay Thurber Volleyball Team

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pride that I stand before the Legislature today to congratulate the Lindsay Thurber high school senior women's volleyball team on being the very first team in Red Deer history to win a provincial 4A championship in volleyball. With determination, hard work, poise, and a lot of Red Deer fans cheering in the stands this team of young ladies played well under great pressure, especially in the final game, to defeat the defending champions from Edmonton's Harry Ainlay high school. This championship team with gold medals from the Tom Bast tournament, the Hunting Hills tournament, the Notre Dame tournament, and the southern Alberta regional championships in Medicine Hat has made Red Deer very proud.

Congratulations to the coach, Kirsten Andersen, and to each member of the team; namely, Cheryl Kranenborg, Jen Atkinson, Julie Young, Ashley Costigan, Raelene Purnell, Chelsa Kallis, Azadeh Boroumand, CaraLeigh Newfield, Ashley Fleming, Sara VanDoesburg, and Justine Barthel. As the very first team to win a provincial 4A volleyball championship for Red Deer you have earned a place in high school history.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

International Human Rights Day

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On December 10 we will celebrate International Human Rights Day, commemorating the signing and proclamation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The United Nations has designated 2001 the Year of Dialogue among Civilizations for reconciliation, peace, and respect of human rights among all people.

In keeping with this designation and in light of the events of September 11 of this year, the theme chosen for this year's event is Reach Out, Make a Difference: Respect the Rights, Freedoms, and Dignity of Others. It calls on each of us to make a commitment towards building a peaceful society by reaching out to ensure fairness and equity for all.

Thank you.

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

HIV/AIDS Living Positive

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to recognize the citizens of Alberta who are living with HIV and AIDS and the organizations that work so hard to provide support for living positive. As we observe AIDS Awareness Week and on December 1 World AIDS Day and the Day With(out) Art, we must recognize that we are all affected by this disease.

HIV does not discriminate. It knows no sexual, age, cultural, ethnic, or religious boundaries. The HIV/AIDS epidemic in Canada has changed from one that affected primarily gay men to the current epidemic that increasingly affects injection drug users and heterosexuals. Because of this shift, HIV/AIDS affects a growing number of women. In Alberta 23 percent of new cases of HIV infection reported in the first six months of 2001 were women.

HIV Edmonton, AIDS Calgary Awareness Association, and the Alberta Community Council on HIV are just three of the 21 agencies devoted to addressing the needs of the living positive community. As we go about our business this week, I would ask that you wear the red ribbon that I have distributed in recognition of the living positive community.

Thank you very much.

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

Character Cities Initiative Drayton Valley

REV. ABBOTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to rise today to recognize a town that is taking a major step towards making Alberta a better place to live, work, and raise a family. Today the town of Drayton Valley will be the first municipality in Canada to implement an international initiative that has been proven to reduce crime, drug abuse, family breakup, as well as many other societal ills. This is called the Character Cities initiative, and it's a communitywide strategy to promote 49 different character traits amongst local governments, businesses, families, and citizens. Character qualities such as compassion, creativity, generosity, gratefulness, responsibility, and tolerance, to name only a few, will be promoted at schools, in churches, at jobsites, and in offices simultaneously each month. The Character First implementation seminar is being taught in Drayton Valley today and is being attended by community leaders and other municipalities that are thinking about joining in this great initiative.

Mr. Speaker, I must specifically recognize Mayor Moe Hamdon

and Pastor Gary Carter, who have together quarterbacked this dream for almost three years to make it a reality today.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Big Smoky Bridge Opening

MR. KNIGHT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with pride and pleasure that I rise today to give recognition to an important event in the Grande Prairie-Smoky constituency. Government staff, engineering firms, and contractors all worked through some very difficult situations, including a flood in July which took out a temporary crossing and some of the forming. Notwithstanding these setbacks, on Tuesday last the second bridge spanning the Big Smoky River on highway 43 was opened. This 303-metre – and for those of us who don't really understand that, that's 985 feet – \$7.8 million structure allowed for the opening of an additional 40 kilometres of twinning on the very important Canamex trade corridor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I'm going to recognize the hon. Deputy Speaker for a special recognition.

Page Recognition

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All hon. members, each day of the session we are served by the tireless efforts of our pages. On behalf of all of the members we want to give each page a small Christmas gift to say thank you and to wish each and every one a Merry Christmas. I'd ask our head page, Brett Shewchuk, to distribute these gifts for us.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Written Questions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given yesterday, it's my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper do stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

head: Motions for Returns

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given yesterday, it is my pleasure to now 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

head: Third Reading

Bill 207 Alberta Personal Income Tax (Tools Credit) Amendment Act, 2001

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege today to move third reading of Bill 207, a bill that has been debated at some length in this Legislature, the bill that would provide, if it continues to receive the support that it has thus far, that apprentices and journeymen in the 50 trades recognized in Alberta be placed on par with other taxpayers who are required to incur expenses in order to do their jobs, in order to complete whatever task is before them to build Alberta's economy.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has received support, I believe, because it simply makes sense. This morning I was at a breakfast meeting with about 300 or 400 people from the Sherwood Park area, and a contractor came up to me. I was just speaking with him briefly, and he said: how's that bill coming along that you had introduced? I was really surprised that he knew anything about this bill. It hadn't been talked about much in the media or any such place. He inquired of it, and I asked him: well, what do you think of it? He said: "Well, it just makes sense. It makes sense to enable those apprentices and journeymen who are expending considerable sums to buy those tools with which to ply their trade to be on par with other taxpayers, to be able to deduct those expenses and not have to purchase them with after-tax dollars."

I'd like to leave time for others who've indicated that they'd like to comment on this bill. I would take my seat at this time and listen to their comments. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to take a moment in this Assembly to acknowledge those apprentices and journeymen who have contacted me and asked for my support of this bill, indicating that it would indeed be a helpful financial opportunity for them to establish themselves in their chosen trade. I would like to go on record in this House as saying that I believe it is a very good bill. It is one that will serve Albertans and particularly the new workforce that we hope to encourage within our province. So I lend my support to it.

Thank you.

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

MR. MASYK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to rise and speak in favour of Bill 207. Bill 207 is important for Albertans because it will help address the growing gap and the need for success in our province and fill in the gaps in the shortage of trades in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, qualified tradespeople are what fuel our economy. I appreciate that we're in the midst of difficult times, but Alberta, more than any other province, is well positioned to ride out the slump in our economic cycle.

Tax relief is a goal for all Albertans that want government tax policy to be fair and not penalize them for making good choices, good choices such as going into trades, apprenticeship and journeymen. This province, Mr. Speaker, is no stranger to the benefits of tax relief.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the members of this Assembly to support Bill 207 and provide the tradespeople in this province with the support necessary to move ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to take this

opportunity to congratulate my colleague from across the way for having the initiative to bring this type of bill forward. I have had a number of phone calls in the constituency office in support of it, and I appreciate him doing this.

The apprenticeship program has been a huge part of my family for many years. My husband is a journeyman carpenter by trade and does work for the Department of Learning and is responsible for managing the Red Deer office of the apprenticeship program, so I'm told often about the skills necessary to become a journeyman and often what is required as to the time commitment when they're going to school, the need for them to sometimes move away from home and go to where they can receive their apprenticeship training for that period of time each year, and of course the cost. I think that this, as was just said a minute ago, enables many, many people to consider the apprenticeship program.

While I have the floor, I would like to congratulate the government of Alberta and the Minister of Learning as well. I think we have an excellent apprenticeship program in Alberta. Hon. minister, this certainly is not my husband telling me to say this, but I do know that we have one of the best in all of Canada, and a lot of other Canadian jurisdictions look to Alberta for assistance in qualifying many trades to be part of the apprenticeship program. The hon. member talked about 50-some trades. That's where they're at right now, but yearly there are new trades that come onstream because, of course, of all the changes within our society. So I think this particular bill, when passed and when proclaimed, will become a very useful tool once again for the other jurisdictions looking our way to see exactly what we're doing.

Right now in Alberta all the trades are very, very busy, and a lot more people, men and women, are looking to the trades for a very good way of life. There are some people that make exceptional money in many of the trades, and many of them are specialized, so I think we can encourage our students to look this way.

I'm very proud, again, of what has been accomplished today. I will be supporting it. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert to be followed by the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today in support of Bill 207. I want to be on record as being in favour of this piece of legislation. I realize that it may take some time for this to become effective, but I believe we need to rectify somewhat of an inequity between a sole-proprietor contractor and an employee who must purchase his tools to work. The constituents of Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert have advised me that we should support our tradespeople in this way, and I will be voting in favour of this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to add a few final comments on this bill before passage. I'd like to commend the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan for bringing it forward. It does bring the tradespeople who are employed and who are required as a condition of employment to purchase their own tools basically on the same or a comparable playing field as those tradespeople who are self-employed, and I certainly do support this.

One of the things that I heard just last Friday night at a Future Summit town hall in my constituency was that fairness in taxation

is a high priority for people in my constituency, and I believe that this Bill 207 does set a fine example of fair taxation amongst the tradespeople. I'm sure that we're going to hear more about fairness in trade at the Future Summit next February, and this gives us an opportunity to show some leadership and get out ahead of what Albertans want by passing this bill now.

I thank you for the opportunity to add those comments.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

DR. TAFT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be siding with the concerns of the Treasurer on this particular bill. I am very concerned about the cost impact of this. I have a concern that so many members are supporting it when we have no sense, that I'm aware of, of the cost impact of this piece of legislation. It does entail a tax expenditure, and a tax expenditure is the same, in effect, as a cash expenditure. My information is that there could well be a hundred thousand or more applicants for this sort of a benefit, and it could end up easily, easily costing the provincial treasury tens of millions of dollars a year, not to mention the very substantial bureaucratic development that may be required to handle that many applicants and the impact on the whole trades registration system.

I am also aware that while this is certainly intended to stimulate trades training, there is a very tight limit on funding for trades training at the technical schools. In fact, NAIT, for example, is expecting no increase whatsoever or at least very little increase, as I understand it, in their budget for trades training for years to come. So I think that may be a more direct way to address any shortages in the supply of tradespeople. I am concerned that we are proceeding with an idea here for which we have not got a clear sense of the cost. My sympathies on this one are with the Treasurer.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

MS HALEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I wanted just to make a few brief comments on third reading of this bill. I do appreciate the motivation behind bringing the bill forward, and I totally concur and respect what he's trying to accomplish. I do however have some concerns about it, starting off with that during the past year we've changed our income tax system in the province of Alberta. We left a graduated system that tied us to the federal government. We brought in a 10 percent flat tax to the benefit of all Albertans. The point behind it was that it was to the benefit of all Albertans.

3:00

We've brought in some tax cuts for corporations with promises of more in the future as we can afford to bring them in. The key on that is: as we can afford to bring them in. We've tried to implement through business tax reviews and corporate and personal income tax reviews over the last six or eight years a careful, methodical, studious method of where the problem taxes were and how to deal with them. The goal, of course, was to try to stay away from things called one-offs, and this is, in fact, a one-off.

I mean, I have no desire to stand in the way of anybody taking up a trade or being able to buy their tools or, in fact, being able to write them off. My concern is that it is not costed out. When you ask for information on what this will cost, no one can answer. If it costs \$100,000 for the entire province, it's not a big deal, but if it costs \$10 million in lost revenue to the province of Alberta in this particular year, it is a big deal.

We're struggling right now. We've virtually wiped out transportation and infrastructure and the construction of new schools and health care facilities because we have a revenue shortfall because of oil and gas right now. There is a recession occurring in the entire country. Whether any of the other provincial governments are admitting it or not, they're all dealing with reduced revenues. We all have increased expenditures. Health care has an inflationary spiral of 10 to 15 percent. Nobody knows where the additional dollars will come from to cover additional costs as our population ages.

We come up with ideas like this, and yes, who doesn't want to have another tax break or a tax cut for anybody? I wouldn't mind another one myself. My concern is that we don't know what this will cost, and I don't think that's a good way to pass laws in the Legislature of Alberta. I think that you have to be careful and methodical and understand all of the ramifications of what you're doing before you do it.

On that basis, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the opportunity to get those points on record, but I won't be supporting this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

MR. VANDERBURG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, I spoke earlier on this tool tax credit, and I want to make some comments regarding the speech earlier by the Member for Edmonton-Riverview about the cost. Early costs no doubt have been calculated and are estimated to be in that 3 and a half million dollar range. But one thing that we all forget is that a tax credit that's derived from the purchase of tools – there's a profit side to the people that are selling the tools, and no one has really thought that it could just be a wash. With a wash really all we do is have an opportunity to recognize a segment of our population that's really created the Alberta advantage.

So I really want to thank the Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan for introducing this, and I do support this wholeheartedly. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment.

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I share many of the ideas that have come forward in support of this bill. Two things I want to comment on. First, I congratulate the member as a private member for bringing forward this bill. I know it's caused lots of debate, and you can see what's happening today. You have people on both sides of the House both for and against it. I think that's what a previous Government House Leader wanted to accomplish when some of the rules of order were changed so that private members would have better access to bring some of their ideas forward. I can remember at the time that that happened in '93 or '94, I interjected, "Free at last; free at last; thank God Almighty, we're free at last," on the part of private members. So certainly I want to support all private members as best I can on the particular issues that they bring forward.

The angle that I want to bring forward in support from the Human Resources and Employment side is one that I haven't heard discussed as yet on this particular issue. Inadvertently in a government's wish to provide assistance to its citizens – and it's not just this government, but it's all jurisdictions across Canada and, I would suggest, right around the world. When you want to care for citizens, there's a fine line, of course, that any person has to cross over at some point when they go from the assistance of the state to the assistance of independence. What has happened, as a matter of fact, in our country – and I would say here in our province as well – is

that we've created a welfare wall, and part of the construction of that wall has been medical benefits that apply to people that are on assistance. It is very scary to think that they should go out and get a job, because there might not be the kind of benefit package that's available within that employment that they would have being on government assistance, and I want to say that I think the cost of tools in sort of granting a job has been one more brick in that particular welfare wall.

With the consideration of this House in terms of this private member's bill it would seem to me that we can provide some kind of encouragement now to those who are just on the cusp of moving from where we have found them. As a department we have moved them into career development and we have provided them with some skills, and they're now ready to move out into that wonderful world of work. We don't want to and we shouldn't be providing any more possible barriers than are absolutely necessary.

It would seem to me that while the purchase of a tool is a necessary expression of being able to work in a particular occupation, we as a government should be able to find the kind of flexibility so that we after all can live with our overall philosophy, and that is that Albertans will be better off working than they will on assistance. I believe that this private member's bill helps us meet that government philosophy.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan to close the debate.

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments today that have been put forward. It's certainly important to express some of the concerns. The Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne has indicated that the rough and as best as could be brought forward estimate is around the \$3 million to \$7 million mark based on current trade enrollment, current practitioners of those trades, the apprentices that are involved. Those are the kinds of dollars that have been estimated are at stake here.

We should recognize the kinds of dollars at stake for the individual. The apprentice who is perhaps just getting started has to go out and buy those tools, and the amendment that was passed the other day would permit for that individual a tax break because of the cost of those tools of \$450. A much bigger impact certainly if the federal government would take this on and as well bring it forward and say that they would acknowledge the same kind of deduction.

You'll also notice that the bill will come into force when proclaimed. That will give the ministries time to negotiate with the federal government about how the line would be put on the Alberta tax sheet that we've got that each individual taxpayer has to fill out, and there has to be some monitoring of that. Those negotiations will take place over some period of time if the bill continues to move through those ministries with their bureaucracy working it out.

So those were some concerns that have been there for some period of time. We believe we've put into place the necessary cautions to help those things be taken care of.

So thank you for your support, fellow members of this Legislature. Shall we have the question, Mr. Speaker?

[Motion carried; Bill 207 read a third time]

3:10

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders

head: Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 209

Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001

THE CHAIRMAN: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Doing all that we can as a government to help protect children in small and big ways will never be enough to see every child reach adulthood safely without injury. This is no reason to stop trying. I support Bill 209, the bicycle helmet bill, because every small step we take to help our parents protect our children helps all Albertans. I would encourage all MLAs to support this bill.

Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenarry.

MR. BONNER: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill in committee and again to echo not only the concerns but the support that so many members of this Legislature have had. When we consider that approximately 100 children under the age of 14 years die in Canada every year from head injuries related to bicycle injuries, then certainly we have to consider this type of a bill.

We certainly are long overdue in recommending this type of safety equipment for people that ride bikes. We have had this type of legislation by various sporting groups throughout the province, whether it be hockey, whether it be skiing, whether it be baseball or softball. So it is a bill that is long overdue. The only recommendation I would have that I don't see in here is that we certainly don't stop at age 18, that we require every adult who is riding a bike to wear a helmet.

So with those few comments, Mr. Chairman, I would urge all members of the Assembly to support this bill and to see that it does get speedy passage through here.

Thank you very much.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

MRS. ADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to rise today and speak to Bill 209, the traffic safety amendment act. First of all, I'd like to begin by thanking the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross for caring about children and wanting to protect them. I support her in that and thank her for her intentions, but I have to say that I think those intentions that center around the safety and protection of children – and as the mother of four boys, trust me, over the years they've needed protection. But good intentions do not necessarily mandate the intervention of government into the lives of citizens, and today I'd like to speak for a few moments on why I think Bill 209 should be defeated by this Assembly.

I rise today not to question the value of wearing a helmet but the statement that is made when government imposes that decision on its citizens, as illustrated in section 2(2) of this bill. Mr. Chairman, I believe that the role of government in the lives of citizens should be limited, that inherent in our system of values is the emphasis on the ideal of individual responsibility. It's true that government does have great responsibility for the public's safety and public health, yet it's also true that responsibilities in these areas should also be the work of average citizens.

I believe in the principle that you teach correct principles and then you allow people to govern themselves. It is the role of parents –

and I'd like to repeat that: the role of parents – to decide for their children if they should be wearing bicycle helmets. It is not the role of this province. I worry about the province taking over any more of the role of parents or that law enforcement officials should be making that determination through legislation.

I would also like to point out, Mr. Chairman, that this bill deals with only one aspect of helmet safety. At what point should hon. members consider bringing in legislation to enforce a helmet law on the thousands of individuals who take to the ski slopes annually? At what point should we be protecting skateboarders from potential falls and mandate that they wear helmets too? Clearly, these individuals are taking a risk when they strap on their skis or visit a local skateboard park, just like bicyclists do when they take to the streets. Why are bicyclists any different from these individuals and the choices that they get to make? Is it government's role to protect these individuals from themselves? That is not our role, Mr. Chairman. That's why I think that Bill 209 should be defeated.

Government does have a duty and a role to educate the public on the benefits of using safety devices in their own lives. The money and the energy that Bill 209 would use to enforce sections of this bill like section 2(2) on children should instead be used to educate both parents and children alike to help them make better choices for themselves. I know that my family and I have enjoyed many hours in Fish Creek park on bikes with helmets on because it's a choice that we've made as a family. I feel that it's a correct choice, but it is one that we made.

Education makes people easy to lead, Mr. Chairman, and that is the direction this province should be headed in. If this Assembly believes that children should be wearing helmets, teach them about the benefits of helmets. Convince them. Win over their minds and those of their parents in this debate, but do not mandate that decision for them. Let's never forget that one of the things that makes this province so strong is our individual ability to make good decisions, to live good lives, and to contribute back to this province.

I encourage all Members of the Legislative Assembly to vote against this bill and let the citizens of this province make their own decisions. Thank you.

Chairman's Ruling Decorum

THE CHAIRMAN: Before I recognize the hon. Member for St. Albert, perhaps I should just remind all hon. members that even though we're in committee – and for the benefit of those in the gallery, this is an informal session, and people are actually allowed to move around and go and sit in places other than their own chair and in a very quiet voice converse with others. Whether it's in the Chamber under Assembly or in the Chamber under committee, you're not supposed to walk between whoever it is that is speaking and the chair, whether the chair is here or there. So that's to benefit all members, because there are many members who in fact transgress from time to time.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Debate Continued

MRS. O'NEILL: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I rise today to speak in favour of this bill brought forth by the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross. The reason I want to lend my support to it is not because I feel that the bill is usurping the right of parents to guide their children. In fact, on the contrary, I think it is our civil duty as legislators to look at those means which provide for the children, indeed for the people of Alberta those opportunities that would make their lives safer and consequently their usage, if you will, of the

services that would be required to be paid for by the state less cumbersome and less obligatory to the state.

3:20

What I would like to do is read a letter that I tabled earlier today, Mr. Chairman, a letter that was sent to the Minister of Transportation and copied to me, as I indicated, and to the Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. It's signed by the mayor of St. Albert, and I would like to read it since I tabled it earlier.

At its meeting on November 5, 2001 St. Albert City Council endorsed the St. Albert Royal Canadian Mounted Police Community Advisory Committee's resolution that states the following:

Whereas 71 Albertans suffered a severe head injury requiring hospitalization as a result of a bicycle-related incident in 1997;

Whereas 461 Albertans made ambulatory visits (including emergency room visits) for medical treatment as a result of bicycle-related head injuries between April 1, 1997 and March 31, 1998;

Whereas bicycle helmets are extremely effective in reducing deaths and head and brain injuries resulting from bicycling incidents;

Whereas a combination of legislation and education is the most effective way to increase helmet usage and decrease bicycling-related head injuries;

Whereas the cost of care of a brain-injured individual can reach \$300,000 in the first year, \$2.5 to \$5.5 million over a lifetime;

Whereas the human societal costs of brain injuries resulting from bicycling incidents are immeasurable;

And whereas 65.4% of Albertans and 77% of Alberta parents are in favour of mandatory bicycle helmet legislation.

And therefore be it resolved that the Alberta Government enact regulations under the Traffic Safety Act making the wearing of approved bicycle helmets mandatory for bicyclists of all ages, and carrying a penalty of a \$50.00 fine for failure to comply with the regulations.

Now, I realize that this is a resolution that originated with the St. Albert RCMP Community Advisory Committee and it is signed by the mayor of the city of St. Albert and we are dealing with a private member's bill, Mr. Chairman. I would like to say that any effort or any consideration that is brought forward here that speaks to the safety of our children and to those circumstances which would enable our children to play safe, free from, we hope, the occasion to unnecessarily injure themselves and cause concern to their families and indeed to us as legislators in this province – so I would like to speak specifically to the details and the contents of this bill.

It does ask that individuals who are under 18 wear helmets while they are cycling. It is only common sense. Whatever we can do to wave that flag of common sense and protection and care for those who play, cycle, enjoy, exercise within our communities, I think it testifies to our strength as a government and indeed our strength as a province that we want to have laws that assist individuals in looking after their own safety under these circumstances.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would again encourage everyone here in this Assembly to realize how important this is not only to the individuals who will be required to wear helmets but also to the greater community at large, the greater community who will benefit by their health, by their contribution, by their work, and by their studies within our respective communities. I would encourage everyone here to look very specifically at the strength of this bill. I commend again the Member for Calgary-Cross for bringing this forward not only as her private member's bill but bringing it forward, as well, having done all her research and the understanding from both the medical community and the resolution that was brought forward by the police council in St. Albert, a recognition of the research and the statistics that have been presented in favour of this recommendation as they look at the imposition, if you will, upon the health system and societal care within our community.

Again, I would urge everyone to support this. There is a great deal of support in my community for this proposal.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View.

MS HALEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Once again I'd like to commend my colleague from Calgary-Cross for bringing forward an interesting bill idea, and once again, keeping to my true form, I'm not going to be supporting it. The reason I'm not going to be supporting it is not because it's not a good idea. Everybody should be wearing a helmet when they're riding a bike. There's just absolutely no question about that.

I think in the latest study that I saw comparing the late 1970s to today, at that point there were about 800,000 cars on the roads in Alberta, and today there are over 2.2 million vehicles on the roads in this province. The real problem is not whether or not you wear a helmet. It's: where, in fact, do you ride a bike safely in cities, in towns, on rural roads? Where is it actually safe to do so?

I was trying to do some research on this, and I hooked on my computer, Mr. Chairman, and I found an article in the *New York Times* that was talking about a bicycling mystery, and the mystery was that head injuries were piling up. The article went on to talk about that the number of head injuries had increased 10 percent since 1991. Even as bicycle helmet usage also rose very sharply during that same period of time, head injuries were in fact increasing. They were trying to figure out why, because over that same period of time that helmet usage was increasing, there was in fact a 10 percent increase in injuries and a 51 percent increase in the use of helmets. So it wasn't logical, what was happening. They were saying that helmets, of course, don't prevent accidents. They are very effective – there's no question about it – at reducing the severity of head injuries, and that's incredibly important.

There were other parts to what they were trying to determine. One of them was that some cycling advocates were contending that the rising number of aggressive drivers was at fault, and possibly that's true. I mean, we hear more about road rage all the time. One of the things that probably annoys people is having cyclists weaving in and out of traffic. When you're trying to slow down for a light, you end up passing the same bicycle rider three and four times in the space of a block. You know, there's probably a confluence of things going on. Maybe people driving vehicles aren't driving as carefully as they should, but people driving bikes aren't paying attention to the rules of the road either.

So the specialists came along, and many specialists in risk analysis argue that something else was at play. It wasn't just helmet laws. They believe that an increased use of bicycle helmets may have had an unintended consequence, making riders in fact feel an inflated sense of security and therefore taking more risks. In the last nine years in the United States 19 state Legislatures passed mandatory helmet laws, and today such statutes cover over 49 percent of American children under the age of 15. I think that's another difference with the law that's being proposed here. When you're dealing with children under the age of 14 or 15, perhaps that's one level, but dealing with people up to the age of 18, I think you've probably gone too far.

Law is not about common sense, and I disagree with my colleague who made that comment. Law is in fact law. Common sense is what we as individuals are supposed to have. As a parent I tried for years to get my sons to wear helmets even when they went skateboarding or snowboarding – and he knows who I'm talking about – but it doesn't always work. These are my sons. When it was 40 below outside, I had a hard time getting them to wear anything to cover their ears so they wouldn't freeze to death. I'm not sure that

by passing a law, you will in fact solve the problem.

One of the things they discovered in the United States is that ridership on bikes actually declined. That's counterproductive, because we're trying to encourage people to participate in sporting activities and become more healthy and look after themselves. At the same time, we're doing things which actually have the opposite impact, because during the same period that these laws were being passed in the States, bicycle ridership declined by 21 percent, and participation in other things – inline skating, skateboarding, and other sports – all increased.

So where do we go with the laws? We can pass this one today, and maybe in the spring session we could bring one in that said: if you're going to ski, snowboard, rollerblade, in-line skate, you name it, we've got it; we got a law for you. I don't think that's why I was sent here. I don't know. I could be wrong. I've never had one call in my office from my constituents. Now, I've been lobbied by other groups and I respect that, but I've never had one call in my office from my 45,000 constituents saying: oh, please, you've got to pass another law.

3:30

There's one other thing I wanted to bring up, and that was something that was interesting. One parallel risk expert in the States was talking about antilock brakes. He said that when they were introduced in the 1980s, they were supposed to reduce accidents, but government and industry studies in the mid-1990s showed that as drivers realized their brakes were more effective, they started driving faster and the accident rates rose. Insurance companies have long been familiar with a phenomenon which they call moral hazard. Once someone is covered by an insurance policy, there's a natural tendency for that person to take more risks. That, I think, is probably the phenomenon that we'll find when we pass a law and it says that everybody must wear a helmet. Perhaps people will in fact start to relax a little bit more about that and say: well, it's perfectly logical; now my son, my daughter will be safe. I don't think that's the intended consequence of the law, but it may well in fact be the consequence of that law.

I guess the last thing I want to say, Mr. Chairman, is that I believe that as Conservatives we have to be very careful about trying to live people's lives for them. I think we need to educate children, we need to educate young families particularly, and we have the ability to do that. We have the well-baby clinics, where we could be passing out information on the importance of looking after your little child whether he's riding a tricycle, moving up to a small bicycle with training wheels, or right on up to the mountain bikes and BMX racers that we have today in the province of Alberta. It is absolutely imperative that we respect adults and people in this province to make decisions in the best interests of their own family.

I don't know how you enforce a law like this when you're not going to put any more resources into policing throughout the province. It's yet one more thing for the police to do, and I believe that they're fairly overburdened now. What are you going to do if they don't pay the fine? Take the bike? Who are you punishing? I see reams of little bike bureaucrats going out there and having a real good time. "Don't just wear your helmet. Make sure it's on properly. By the way, you know, you could break your neck. Your head will be okay, your neck will be broke, but we'll worry about that next year because I'm sure we'll be able to find a collar or a brace or a bodysuit that we can wrap you up in to keep you 100 percent safe for 100 percent of your life."

It can't be done, Mr. Chairman, and we've got to stop deluding ourselves and the people of this province by passing laws that will not make that much difference at the end of the day. Educate them

instead. Make sure that parents know the importance of this. Make sure that children understand the importance of it for their own safety, their own security, and the health of their lives. I think that's what we can do, and we can do a really good job of it.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

MR. SNELGROVE: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman and hon. members. I have to tell you that in all likelihood this isn't a really pleasurable thing to debate because there probably are no winners in a caucus when we have to debate an issue that doesn't really have, I believe, a positive yes or no. I don't believe the debate here about this law is about whether people should wear bicycle helmets or not, because I think, as the hon. member previous said, there is no question that in the right circumstances or the wrong circumstances a bicycle helmet can save serious injury and possibly a life. That goes without saying.

I've got four children, and by and large their mother tried very hard to make them wear bicycle helmets. Many, many times they were spread out down the block or back up the block, and it's pretty hard for a six year old to remember exactly where he's left his bicycle helmet. I, too, would hate to see the bicycle gestapo chase him down to tag him with a little ticket.

I don't believe that the debate should be about the statistical information on whether or not bicycle helmets increase or decrease ridership, whether they will in fact kind of hurt some of the other programs we have, because I don't believe that's the issue here either. I don't believe that the issue about saving health care is fair either. We all remember the arguments used when we passed the seat belt law here, that it was going to save us millions and hundreds of millions of dollars, and in fact our health care just went through the roof. There's no question that for individuals in some circumstances it saves their lives, and under those circumstances it may have in fact saved health care some money. But if he's not fixing Joe for a seat belt, he's fixing Fred's knees, so it isn't going to save health care money, folks. We know that going in. It's us that made the system not hold people accountable for what they do. It's not them. We've made a health care system that doesn't recognize personal responsibility. Let's not start passing laws to cover that. That doesn't make any sense.

The hon. member before me talked a little bit about enforcement. We might all have this wonderful picture of the friendly beat cop going down the street helping the kids on their bikes and patting them on down the road. That in fact isn't going to be the problem, but when we see the RCMP pull up to a group of teenagers beside the 7-Eleven or beside the convenience store and they're there without their helmets, they're going to scatter. They're going into alleys; they're going out on streets. They don't want to get a ticket. So we're not going to have a very positive relationship fostered between our young children and the police, and I think that's very counterproductive, because if you start running when you're eight, you'll be running when you're 18.

I guess you have to go back to the poor families in Alberta too. There are lots of people that aren't on any of the government programs. We've talked about them. Maybe they don't have the wherewithal to just go and buy helmets at will for four or five kids. Are we going to provide them helmets? Are we going to make them make a choice whether they have to do without food or rent to get a helmet, or are we just going to make them criminals? It's quite a bit like the gun law the federal government passed. It didn't accomplish what it set out to do, and this won't either.

We talk a little bit more about enforcement. I'm not a lawyer,

thank goodness, but I would have to wonder about enforcing a helmet law at a school when the child leaves his home with the helmet on, gets to school, and takes it off at noon hour to go for a bike ride. He probably had to go for a bike ride because his playgrounds were ripped out. He forgets to put his helmet on. The police come along and say: well, that's it. Who's responsible? We don't even hold 13- or 14- or 15-year-old kids responsible for bad things they do. How are we possibly going to hold them responsible for riding without their bike helmet? We can't go home and tell mother or father that we caught them. It is unenforceable. If we can't enforce it, don't pass it. It won't work.

We've got to go back a little bit to this false sense of security. I grew up playing hockey, and my kids are all playing hockey now. Over the years we've had a lot of people involved in that sport who probably never played it, and we've put our little kids into armour now. They're covered from head to toe. They can't be hurt, you see. You're right; we get very few stitches. We hardly lose any more teeth. We may have a great looking bunch of NHL stars, but what we're breaking are backs and necks. The kids think they're invincible. They dive into boards. They fall into nets. It has hurt seriously more than it has helped. You can't start to tell people: "Don't worry. We're looking after you. Put your helmet on. You're safe. Get out there on the street."

There are a bunch of causes we can have. I call this bill a cause. There are skateboards. There are rollerblades. There's rodeo. We all witnessed the young man hurt here in Edmonton. Are we going to outlaw rodeo? Least of all, we should have maybe seat belts on them so they wouldn't fall off. We can't eliminate people from doing things that hurt themselves.

Folks, this isn't about: is it right to wear a bicycle helmet? Of course you should. I'm not arguing that, but there is no end to good causes that we can write laws or create motions about. It is not government's responsibility to pick one or two from the tree and say: let's do this this year, and let's do that next year. We are going to have children hurt no matter what we do. That's unfortunate, but it's going to happen.

I just know from experience, or feel I know, that when government starts to get in the business of raising families and making personal choices for you, they don't do it very well. I would just ask you to think of any issue where we've taken personal responsibility from people that has helped in the long run. It doesn't.

Now, I only say this to the people here. The government taxes our money. We have to accept that, but please, please don't start to tax my responsibility as a parent, because I do resent that part of it. Other than that, I just ask you to consider where we are going when we start to bring bills like this through the Legislature.

Thank you.

3:40

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

MR. HORNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 209 as well. I've had a lot of opportunity over the last few months to talk to my constituents on this matter, and I am reminded of when I was a young lad growing up in Alberta and the big debate over seat belt regulations. The last hon. member mentioned it, and he raised probably all of the same arguments that were raised for the seat belt debate. I know that it is still a pretty serious concern for a lot of people, but I do know that now I wear my seat belt out of a sense of habit, as I'm sure all hon. members of this House do.

Mr. Chairman, as I said, I've had the opportunity to speak to my

constituents about this matter. I've talked to the parents, I've talked to the teachers, and I've talked to the kids. These are the people that we're going to affect with this legislation in this House. These are the people who put me here. When I was talking to them and visiting them in the classrooms, they told me that this is a good bill to pass. This is what they would like me to support.

I know the arguments from both sides because of the debates that we've had over these issues. I am a Conservative as well, but government does have a responsibility, and one of those responsibilities is to listen to our constituents. I take that responsibility very seriously. So the message to me was very clear. The majority of my constituents want me to support this bill, so I must, and I ask the support of this Legislature to support the bill as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to add a few more comments in committee to the ones I have made in second reading. I've listened to the debate so far with quite a bit of interest, and I appreciate both sides of the argument. I acknowledge that the number of injuries has increased even though the ridership in some of those jurisdictions has decreased, but the style of riding has also changed over the years. I watch on television some of the freestyle and high-risk ways that young people are riding in competitions, and I'm reminded of when I was a young person so very long ago, when television first came out.

AN HON. MEMBER: They had television back then?

MR. MARZ: Yes, we did have television back then. It was black and white and it was brand new, and we watched it through the store windows because we couldn't afford one of our own.

One of the shows that was prevalent, Mr. Chairman, was *Stampede Wrestling*. I'm sure all of you who are of similar vintage to me will remember watching *Stampede Wrestling* and the influence it had on our lives. We went to school and our mothers could never figure out how come we came home with our shirt in shreds and all our buttons missing, because how could this happen sitting in a classroom and just playing on the swings? Well, we were doing body slams and dropkicks just the same as we envisioned it to be on television, and we did some severe damage to our clothes and sometimes to ourselves.

Cyclists today, as you can see in the parking lots and shopping malls and on the stairs of public buildings, are riding up and down, they're skidding them across rails, they're trying to do all sorts of things, and you see them pile up. They do the same thing on skateboards and snowboards and rollerblades. Those that they're mimicking are wearing safety equipment, but where do we stop with legislating safety equipment? You can have elbow injuries, you can have knee injuries on bicycles as well, and I'm sure they're a cost to the health care system, for those that are concerned about that. I'm concerned about where this is going to end up. As the hon. Member for Airdrie-Rocky View stated, next spring it will be dealing with skiers, snowboarders.

I see that probably the activity that has the most number of injuries is driving a motor vehicle. There are thousands and thousands of them on the highways, and there are far more accidents involving motor vehicles than there are bicycles, because there are simply more of them and there are lots of accidents. We have air bags and we have seat belts, as was stated by some of the hon. members, but race car drivers have those types of safety equipment and they also wear

helmets. Are we going to put helmets on people that are driving motor vehicles? It makes as much sense to do that as it does this if we're looking at saving costs to the health care system.

I'm concerned that taken to the limits of another couple of sessions, we won't be able to legally leave our houses unless we appear like the Michelin Man so we won't hurt ourselves. Mr. Chairman, that is a concern. I believe that government has a responsibility, but part of government's responsibility is ensuring that individuals take responsibility themselves for their actions and encourage that as much as possible.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll close, but I would like to close by saying that I think education, not legislation, is the key to safer riding on our roadways. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Community Development.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I rise to put a few comments on record with respect to this important private member's bill, Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001, brought forward by our colleague from Calgary-Cross. I, too, have received a few phone calls, not a large number by any stretch. Nonetheless, a few comments have come to my office from constituents who are supportive of this particular legislation. I think the recognition in their support is with respect to the issue of safety for children and for society in general.

I know that it's by and large a commonsense issue, and I can certainly tell you from my personal perspective that when my children were growing up, we did provide them with proper headgear, be it for bicycling or skateboarding or rollerblading or skiing or whatever it happened to be. We did take those precautions. We did it voluntarily. We didn't need a law to have common sense prevail.

I'm also well aware that there are impacts on injury numbers as reported through our emergency wards and through other mechanisms, so that point is not lost. In fact, the Alberta Center for Injury Control & Research – everyone knows the group I'm talking about I'm sure – does have some compelling evidence that it has advanced with respect to the need for some stronger guidelines, perhaps laws, that would support erring on the side of safety and caution.

Having said that, however, I do have some concerns about the enforcement that might become necessary here and to what extent it would be possible to police this issue. It's not quite the same, in my view, as the argument for seat belts, for example, where we have certain age restrictions apply. Quite obviously, you need to be at least 16 years of age to drive a motor vehicle in this province, and there are certain places where you can ride that particular vehicle and so on. So it's easier, if you will, to enforce the seat belt legislation than it would be to enforce the outcroppings of what this legislation may become.

3:50

The fact is that children especially are in the habit of just jumping on a bike and driving where ever at whatever time. It poses one type of a problem in the cities, but I can tell you that as a young man growing up in the rural climes of our province, in Sangudo particularly, there was a whole different perspective on bike riding. It was a main activity, because we didn't have all that much to do. But we grew up looking after ourselves in a different way, and I'm not suggesting that we don't still apply common sense today, because I know that we do. I'm simply pointing out that during my time as a bike rider, specifically a bicycle rider, we did exercise proper precautions to the best of our ability. Of course, we had the benefit of things like balloon tire bikes. I don't remember anyone in the

town owning a 10-speed or a five-speed or any of those. We had one speed. It was slow, and we were very careful about that. We also didn't have the benefit of paved roads; we still had wooden sidewalks. So I'm going back a little bit down memory lane here, and I'm sure . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: When were you born?

MR. ZWOZDESKY: I was born a long time ago, hon. member.

We did take great precautions as did our parents to exercise education on a very commonsense level.

Now, with respect to the calls that I've had from some of my constituents, whom I'm bound to represent, I do understand their points, and I do understand the need for us to be vigilant, especially where children are concerned, but having said that, I do have some reservations with respect to how we might be treading on that ever so dangerous ground of trying to legislate common sense.

I want to conclude there and allow other members, should they wish to, to continue speaking on this important bill. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to make a few comments on this particular bill. I know that a lot of the issues have already been brought up on this bill, but I think that to begin with everyone in here is very supportive of wearing bicycle helmets. I think we should underscore that, because we want to see that happen. What we're talking about with this legislation is: how do we make it happen, and should government make it happen?

I just want to say that it's going to happen a bit like this. When government steps in and takes that responsibility, then parents will step out and let them do it. In many, many cases you'll have the police trying to do what the parents should be doing, and we do not have anywhere near enough police to do that. And should they? When should people take their own responsibility? And how many freedoms and so on do we want to interfere with? How much do we want government to come in and run our lives?

I happened to be around here at the time that the seat belt legislation came in and remember very well some of the arguments for and against. Whether it has proven to be a whole lot better – yes, it did at the beginning. Would we have educated ourselves enough to have done it anyway? I guess we don't know that answer, but I think maybe we should try it a different way this time so that people are educated and they want to, and then they will have their helmets on a lot more.

It interferes with your own personal life each time we run another bill through the Legislature like this, and there are many, many more. I mean, you can go all the way to smoking and drinking and whatever. There are many, many things that you can start legislating, whether it's bike helmets or, as was mentioned, rodeo helmets. It could be any kind of thing. But let them do it. I think that we should see that the opportunity is there to do it, but to get in and actually legislate it, one after another after another, slowly does take away any responsibility that you might have.

I want to just make my final point about the responsibilities and the freedoms that you're taking away, and I'll do it with this little story about the fellow that went to the doctor. "Doc," he says, "If I quit drinking and smoking and chasing women, will I live to be a hundred?" And the doctor says: "No, you won't, but it'll seem like it." I want you to think about that. I want you to think about that a little bit as we gradually take away every freedom. At some point it will start interfering with your quality of life.

With that, I don't think I can support this bill the way it is, but I do want to see us get helmets on. Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 209 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

THE CHAIRMAN: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: Carried.

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:56 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Goudreau	Mar
Blakeman	Graydon	Maskell
Bonner	Hlady	Massey
Boutilier	Horner	Oberg
Calahasen	Hutton	O'Neill
Cao	Jablonski	Pham
Cardinal	Kryczka	Rathgeber
Danyluk	Lord	Stelmach
Ducharme	Lougheed	Tarchuk
Fritz	Magnus	Zwozdesky
Gordon		

Against the motion:

Ady	Dunford	Marz
Coutts	Fischer	Snelgrove
DeLong	Haley	Vandermeer
Doerksen	Knight	

Totals:	For – 31	Against – 11
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[Motion carried]

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee rise and report Bill 209.

[Motion to report Bill 209 carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills and reports Bill 209.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed? So ordered.

4:10

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
head: Third Reading

(continued)

Bill 208
Alberta Official Song Act

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort to move third reading.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move Bill 208 for third reading.

Since the introduction of the debate on Bill 208 last May, even knowing that the bill has not been passed and without my solicitation, many Albertans from across our province sent in many supporting inquiries and song submissions in the form of lyrics, music sheets, tapes, and CDs. My thanks go to each of them. I also want to acknowledge queries from some of the hon. members about the costs and copyrights of their musical works. I must say that the musical and poetic works so far are the labour of love for Albertans from the authors. No one asked for money. Everyone wants to sing about Alberta. We should not underestimate the labour of love and volunteering spirit of Albertans.

Bill 208 does not intend to address the detailed process of selection and arrangements with the authors. It is the work to be done by the official song committee, as stipulated in the bill. As to the composition of the official song committee, Bill 208 does specify the participation of all parties in the House and the Alberta public. However, the number of committee members has to be limited to be effective as a working committee, but everyone is welcome to participate.

Hon. colleagues of the House, your passing of Bill 208 and its song selection process will give Albertans a celebrating spirit for our bright future, uplifting us beyond the current cloudy and stormy weather of our world. Your passing of Bill 208 will give our 25th Legislature a landmark of an Alberta official song for our centennial celebration in 2005.

I would like to sincerely thank my MLA colleagues, media professionals, and many fellow Albertans for speaking in support and passing votes on the bill. My special thanks go to the hon. Minister of Community Development for his expression of support. Once the bill is passed, his department will help in the implementation.

To conclude, I would like to thank our colleagues in the House and all fellow Albertans with a lyric that I wrote last weekend. It's adapted from the musical score of Mr. P.H. Luu of long ago, that I am familiar with. I don't know if it's appropriate for me to sing, so I just want to read it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Sing. Sing.

MR. CAO: With the permission of the Speaker. So at the request of my colleagues, may I have your permission?

Our Alberta, the land of people free.
Together we're building our great province,
From Western Rockies to Eastland prairies,
And Northland forest to Southern rivers,
Blue sky, white snow always pure,
Green grass and wheat fields abound.
We're Albertans, so blessed and free.
We're Canadians, proud of country.
From all parts of the world we have come here
To live together in peaceful joy.
Albertans, we stand together.
Albertans, we will forever
Keep on building province we love.
Blessings from God to Albertans.

With that bellowing, I thank you for bearing with me.

Hon. colleagues of the House, Bill 208 has passed committee debate; for that I thank you very much. In the final third reading stage it is now in your good hands to pass it again.

Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

MR. MARZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've never seen the Assembly so attentive before. Perhaps we've discovered a new form of debate. If we can carry it out in song, I think we'd keep everybody's attention.

I spoke to this in second reading last spring, and since then a number of my constituents, not a lot of them but quite a number of them, have spoken to me about this. They expressed the view that they thought having an official song was a good idea, and certainly having a competition amongst Albertans so they all have the opportunity to participate in it was certainly another good idea. I would like to pass on my compliments to the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort for bringing this forward.

I just have a few brief comments, Mr. Speaker. In the haste of speaking in the spring on this bill, there were some errors in identifying the writers of certain songs. I would acknowledge a couple of great Canadian songwriters: Mr. Gordon Lightfoot, who did write *Alberta Bound*, and Ian Tyson, who wrote and sang *Old Alberta Moon*. I just wanted to clarify that for the record.* Both songs depict the wonderful Alberta lifestyle that we have, just two fine examples of songs that have been written about our fair province already, and I'm sure that on the passage of this there'll be a lot of Albertans that will be excited about getting involved in putting forth their submissions to add to the one the Member for Calgary-Fort graced us with in the House just moments ago.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that I will be supporting this bill and urge my colleagues in the Legislature to do the same. Thank you.

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

MR. DANYLUK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will present my little speech, and I emphasize "speech," because I will not be singing. But it is my pleasure to support Bill 208, the Alberta Official Song Act. I think it's a great idea, and I would like to offer my thanks to the Member for Calgary-Fort for bringing this matter to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, this bill would give a committee the power to seek out original songs and the power to recommend one of them as an official song for Alberta. The nonpartisan nature of this committee displays this bill's goal to be representative of all Albertans with a submission process that will allow composers from all over the province to compete. This song will then be officially unveiled in 2005 to mark Alberta's hundredth anniversary as a province of Canada.

4:20

Designating a song for Alberta on our centennial anniversary will provide a lasting impression of the people and the culture that make up our fair province. We would seize this opportunity and create a legacy that future generations will recognize and be proud of. I would imagine, Mr. Speaker, that our hundredth anniversary might be just the biggest event the province has seen since the turn of the millennium. Many ideas have been brought forward and are being considered for the centennial celebrations, but a song for Alberta might just be the best yet the most economical venture we can do for the hundredth anniversary.

*See p. 748, left col., para.10, line 2

This debate has been a breath of fresh air in this Assembly. It has allowed my hon. colleagues to talk about and, as we have recently seen, to sing about this province, which might include the praises we have and the respect we have for our province. Some of my colleagues have offered that it should be a testament to the diverse culture and ethnic history of Alberta. Others have mentioned a desire to hear a song that will tell all who hear it about the beauty of our environment. These are all valid propositions, Mr. Speaker, and I think that any and all of these ideas would make an excellent song for Alberta. Maybe that is why this bill has caught the attention of so much of the public and the media. First of all, it's great, and second, it's a fun idea because the possibilities for this song are truly endless.

Mr. Speaker, I am touched and inspired by the words recently shared with me and written by one of my constituents. They reflect upon this great province, the hard work of those who built it, and the pride and appreciation of those who remain living here, raising their families on this beautiful land. There are undoubtedly so many great things to say about this province.

Another point of consideration is that our province already has a substantial range of official emblems. I am sure most Albertans know the wild rose, our official flower, and our provincial coat of arms, but we have an official animal, tree, tartan, stone, and even fish. The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort made a very good point in his opening speech by remarking that all the symbols are visible, and it is time to indulge one of our other senses with the official song.

The song will always be for Albertans by Albertans, but I am sure it will be heard by many, many people. In the same way that the opportunities and advantages of coming to Alberta have drawn so many to our province over the years, the official song will call for our Alberta advantage in years to come.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 208 read a third time]

PARLIAMENTARY COUNSEL: For third reading, Bill 209, Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001.

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

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak today in third reading, but before I do, I wondered if I could ask for unanimous consent of the Assembly to introduce guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce Mrs. Jackie Petruk, executive director, and her staff from the Stollery children's hospital who are with us today. I know that they've been in the Assembly several times to listen to this bill throughout the different readings that we have had. Could you please rise.

head: Public Bills and Orders Other than

Government Bills and Orders

head: Third Reading

(continued)

Bill 209

Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Hon. member, if you'd move the bill, then you can speak to it.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to move third reading of Bill 209, Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is about the very special value that we as a society have for our children and youth. It is about protecting them from injury, disability, and death, and it is about saving our health care system millions of dollars through safe bike-riding practices.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank everyone who supported making bicycle helmets mandatory for our children and youth. KIDSAFE Connection at the Stollery children's hospital, the Brain Injury Association of Alberta, the Alberta Center for Injury Control & Research, all the health authorities in Alberta, the RCMP, St. John Ambulance, the Edmonton and Calgary police services have all vocalized their strong support for mandatory bicycle helmets, and I strongly thank them today for that support.

The biggest supporter of this legislation has to be the parents in this province. I know that over 77 percent of parents in a public survey that was conducted by KIDSAFE Connection supported mandatory bicycle safety helmet legislation because they have the same fears as I do. Although we cannot foresee every danger, we can prevent some accidents, and I think that we should use every tool available to us as parents to protect our children and prevent the worst from happening. Mandating children and youth 17 years of age and under to wear bicycle safety helmets at all times while riding a bicycle will give parents one more tool to help protect their children.

Mr. Speaker, along with Alberta's parents who voiced their strong support for Bill 209, there are a number of groups and organizations within the province who treat head trauma and know how serious bicycle-related head injuries are and how preventable they can be. KIDSAFE Connection, who's with us today, is sponsored by Capital health and works together with the Stollery children's hospital to promote child safety. This report that they had released in 1997 with a number of shocking statistics and truths about bicycle-related trauma suffered by our children was interesting, and I know it was filed with the Assembly earlier in other debates.

For example, the report detailed that close to 6,500 people are admitted to an emergency room in Alberta in a one-year period for a bicycle-related injury, and of these 6,500 over 4,000 were children under 20. Only 18 percent of these children who came to the emergency room had been documented as wearing a helmet at the time of their accident. The most impressive statistic is that bicycle helmets have been shown through research to reduce brain injury by 88 percent and upper and mid-facial injury by 65 percent. National statistics show that only 15 percent of children wear a bicycle helmet while riding a bike. That's national statistics: 15 percent. It's a very serious concern since in a one-year period our hospitals here in Alberta recorded over 460 emergency room visits for head injuries due to a bike-related accident. When you consider that the bike-riding season is only six months long in Alberta, that averages to 75 emergency room visits per month.

Bike riding is the most popular sport amongst our children; 90 percent of children and youth ride bikes. Because they are the most frequent users, they're the age group most hospitalized. Not only could this be attributed to proportionally greater numbers of young riders, but it also has been proven that youth in Alberta are not as cautious or as responsible as they could be. Children tend to take more unnecessary risks than adults do.

Mr. Speaker, approximately 50 children in 1997 required an inpatient hospital stay for their bike-related injury. Most of the injuries sustained happened close to home, and only one-quarter of bicycle-related injuries involved a motor vehicle. Most occurred from a fall, and statistics show that a fall from a bike traveling only 20 kilometres per hour can cause death.

Mr. Speaker and hon. colleagues, there has been some consider-

able discussion about the mandatory safety helmet infringement upon the freedoms of choice for individuals. An encroachment on personal freedoms is a difficult challenge for any government, and I respect what I heard in the Assembly here earlier today. I know that *Hansard* will be read and people will be very interested, because there really are two sides to this issue. It was very well balanced today in Committee of the Whole, and I appreciate the debate of my colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak, though, a bit about the Canadian provinces, including B.C., Manitoba, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, as well as other countries, Australia, New Zealand, many of the United States. They all have bicycle safety helmet legislation in place. A recent study conducted in B.C. after the 10-year anniversary of helmet legislation shows that legislation has drastically aided compliance. Mandatory helmet legislation does work, but I believe, much like my colleagues had mentioned earlier in Committee of the Whole, that it really should be working along with an education program.

4:30

More and more scientifically documented information becomes available every day. I found it very interesting over the past few months since Bill 209 was first introduced to read a great deal of new and helpful information in the area of efficacy of bicycle helmet protection. I now have three very large volumes of letters from renowned physicians and medical personnel and many others, as well as significant data and research. It ranges from the cost-effectiveness of bike helmet legislation to, as we said earlier and heard from colleagues, the need for education programs in order for our children and youth to change their bike riding habits so they'll include wearing a helmet so that they can live long, healthy lives.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote Dr. Dan McGowan, who took the time to write and give strong support to Bill 209. He wrote:

I am a physician specialist in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Many of the people that I look after in hospital have suffered spinal cord injury and multiple trauma. Others on the unit have had traumatic brain injuries. Many of the events that caused these injuries could have been prevented. The cost to the health care system for life long care for these people runs in the millions. The impact on families is always devastating. The drain on health resources is immense. Research shows that bicycle helmets reduce the risk of brain injury by 88 percent and 77 percent of parents support it. There are pages of information to describe the benefits of helmet use, but isn't this enough? Wearing a bike helmet is, at worst, a nuisance or a small inconvenience. This is an opportunity to demonstrate preventative cost incurring strategies for health care not to mention the opportunity to protect our children.

Mr. Speaker, for clarification, how many minutes is it in third reading that we can speak?

THE CLERK: It's 20 minutes.

MRS. FRITZ: It is 20 minutes? Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, every taxpayer pays for the cost of treating head injuries, and according to information from the center for disease control every dollar spent on a bike helmet results in a societal cost saving of \$32. It must be understood that for everyone who has a bicycle-related accident and sustains a fall, whether the cause is a collision with a motor vehicle or a fall due to gravel, a pothole, loss of balance, whatever, it's still a fall. Everyone who falls from a bicycle is at risk for a head injury due to the mechanisms involved in the event: the speed of the bicycle, the height of the body exaggerated by biking position, the velocity of the head during the fall, and the rigidity of the impact surface. At the time of impact the

brain, which is an organ of jellylike tissue, undergoes an additional internal collision within the confined space of the skull. The brain is the most important organ for all of us to protect from injury. It does not recover in the way a fracture from a fall will. In fact, people who sustain a brain injury can have effects from their injury for the rest of their life.

The efficiency of bicycle helmets is very high. An interesting summation at a recent research conference stated that far more lives can be saved through the application of known injury prevention strategies than would be saved with the next generation of vaccines currently being developed.

[Mr. Lougheed in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Kenneth Petruk, who is a proactive leader in the field of brain and spinal cord injuries, acknowledged through a written letter his strong support for Bill 209.

As Director of the Division of Neurosurgery at the University of Alberta and Regional Clinical Program Director of Neurosciences, Capital Health Authority, I strongly urge you to support this very important legislation. With the increasing cost of acute health care provision, it is now mandatory that a strong focus on preventative measures be undertaken by legislators, health care providers and leaders within the private sector. Recent scientific research has overwhelmingly demonstrated the efficacy of helmet protection against mild, moderate and severe head injuries. This reduction in brain injury incidence translates into a health care cost savings of hundreds of millions of dollars per year.

I respect what he has to say to this issue because he works in the field.

Mr. Speaker, last week, too, I had an opportunity to visit and tour the Stollery children's hospital here in Edmonton, and I understand that our Premier attended the opening ceremonies just three or four weeks ago. It's a beautiful pediatric hospital, and during the tour from the staff that are here today, I learned that children between five to 17 years of age fell into the most at-risk group for bike-related injuries. Mrs. Jackie Petruk, executive director, whom I introduced earlier, and Kathy Nykolyshyn and other staff, I thank you all for your wisdom. You're here with us today, and I thank you for showing me the data which stated that in 1999 there were 4,288 children and youth who went to the ER as a result of a bicycle injury; 162 were hospitalized. Sadly three young people died as a result of their bike accident. These are actual facts. It's raw data from the Stollery children's hospital.

In terms of a public health problem bike injuries really are the leading one for youth. I know we heard earlier about in-line skating, skateboarding, skiing, and snowboarding and whatnot, but this is really the number one problem, which is why we're beginning with this in this bill today. It's quite incredible really.

Also, Mr. Speaker, Dr. Louis Francescutti, director of the Alberta Center for Injury Control & Research, who deeply believes the positive effect that Bill 209 will have on so many lives, wrote:

Research has proven both the protective effect of helmets in reducing devastating and costly head injuries and of legislation in raising the awareness and usage of helmets by the public. Bicycle riders with helmets have an 85 percent reduction in their risk of head injury and an 88 percent reduction in their risk of brain injury. During the first year of legislation in Victoria, Australia, cyclists killed or hospitalized with head injuries decreased by 51 percent compared to the year before the legislation.

I trust and value what Dr. Francescutti has written.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

At our recent injury prevention and control conference he wrote:
Her Honour, the Honourable Lois Hole, Lieutenant Governor of

Alberta, reminded us that the ultimate violation of an individual's rights is death or a severely disabling injury. Please take this to heart. The citizens of Alberta and, in particular, our children need your support.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it's clear that we need bicycle helmet legislation in this province. As I said earlier, I respect that there are both sides of this issue. It's been well stressed and spoken to here in the Legislature, but I am hoping and I ask the Assembly that they would let this come to a vote here today at third reading.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I first would like to begin by thanking my hon. colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross for bringing this bill forward, and I would like to compliment her. I've known the member for a number of years, even before she and I graced the hallowed halls of the Legislature, and she has always been one to do a very, very thorough job, just as she finished telling us about all the facts, statistics, the names of the people she's written to and talked to and that she had the opportunity to view a hospital. I think it attests to her ability that the people are in the gallery today. I thank them for coming.

Mr. Speaker, I grew up in a house where it was often said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I know with many, many people in my constituency and all over Alberta, their children are wearing bicycle helmets, so the passing of this legislation would not be a hardship on them. They're already doing it, but not everyone is. This is what the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross and the others that are in favour of this are trying to achieve. We want to protect these children.

I think what we're talking about here is a very low-cost investment whose yield will be very, very high. These helmets, as the hon. member and several members have talked about, will prevent skull fractures, prevent a life from being spent in a wheelchair, prevent the loss of human life. Part of what we have been dealing with with the revamping of health care over the last number of years is talking more about wellness and prevention, and I think that here what we're trying to do is talk about prevention.

While I am standing before you, I think back – and I think it was mentioned earlier – about the wearing of seat belts while driving a car and how all that came to be. There was a lot of controversy several years ago. Would it in fact save your life? Would it be cumbersome? Would people do it? What would be the fine? Et cetera, et cetera. We now know today that seat belts do save lives, and we do know that most, in fact all, jurisdictions in Canada have mandatory seat belt laws as well as several jurisdictions outside of Canada.

4:40

I know that in my particular area of central Alberta right now the RCMP, who are to be commended for the outstanding job they do on our highways – and I'm primarily talking about the RCMP that patrol highway 2, the central Alberta corridor – are very, very concerned about the number of male drivers under the age of 25 that refuse to buckle up. They right now in central Alberta have a huge advertising campaign to really encourage these young males drivers to please use their seat belts. In fact, now when there's a fatality, an RCMP officer will literally stand there and say: this life could have been saved if the individual had been wearing a seat belt.

So we do know from that history and that period of time that we did make the right decision in making people buckle up, and I think it was said here earlier that it has now become habit that most people

just fall into and do. It isn't a hardship, and I don't think the mandatory use of helmets will be a hardship. I think that children will learn to wear them and will want to wear them. So I would ask, Mr. Speaker, that everyone in the House think back to when we made mandatory seat belts the law and where we are with seat belts and safety and the number of traffic deaths today compared to then per our population.

Again, I congratulate the member for her hard work, and I thank her.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak at third reading in support of the bill. I believe it's a good move, and I'm delighted that it's before the House. I do think, though, that it's just one piece of what is needed in terms of bicycle safety, and I looked at the national program that is carried on in the United States in terms of bicycle safety. That bicyclists wear helmets is just one part of a five-part program that their national strategy has in terms of making sure that people riding bicycles, in particular children, are kept safe, and the other four parts are important. I would hope that at some future date there might be consideration for a provincial initiative in terms of bicycle safety that would include some of the factors that are considered in the American national program.

The first goal for their program is that motorists will share the road. This is an important goal, and making motorists aware of the need to make way to accommodate bicyclists is an important goal. Any of you who have driven in this city and been near the university campus and other parts of the city where there are bicycle riders trying to share the road know that the kinds of indignities they suffer I think sometimes border on the very, very dangerous.

A second goal of the national program and, I think, a worthy one is that bicyclists will ride safely. That, I think, has been referred to by a number of members in debate, that along with the helmet program we need to make sure there's an education program in place that will make bike riders very aware of their obligations to ride safely for their own safety.

A fourth goal of the national program is that the legal system will support safe bicycling. They go on to mention the need for courts and the law system to be aware of bicycle safety statistics and to accommodate that awareness in the kinds of judgments that are being made and the work that is done that involves legal bicycle safety.

The last goal that they have is that roads and paths will safely accommodate bicyclists. I think that this is something that we have made a little progress on. There are bicycle routes set aside, lane-marked in some areas, and certainly bicycle routes within the city, but if you ride some of those routes, for instance in the southwest part of the city, they are still designed as an afterthought to the transportation in the city. Certainly even when the bike trails are marked, you have to be extremely careful. The other disconcerting thing is they can end without any notice, so you can be on a trail and find yourself stranded and having to get out on the road with the traffic.

I think the five goals of that national program are worthy of consideration here, and the passage of this bill, I think, this afternoon hopefully is just the beginning of a more comprehensive bicycle safety program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HLADY: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate you allowing me to stand today. I'd like to thank, as many others have, the Member for Calgary-Cross for doing this. I first introduced this back in about 1994, and this House wasn't ready for this legislation back then. I'm glad it is today.

I guess many people have talked to it from many different angles. What I wanted to do is strictly go from an economic point and make that point for a moment and the cost to our society and why it's necessary. I think the reason for the legislation is because our society is not quite into the libertarian mode and to accept it at that level. We aren't accountable. Therefore, there is a need for this to help make sure that we can make it a safer society. That's why it's there. The example is that if in a libertarian society you would allow people to choose whether or not you wanted to do this or not, then you'd also be responsible for having to take care of the costs. It is a major cost, and that's been referred to many times. In talking to the neurosurgeons in the Calgary regional health authority, they know, as do other doctors across the province and across Canada, that the costs are horrendous when we have someone who hasn't had a helmet on.

Quickly, I would like to tell a short story of why I had first introduced it and why I think this is still important today. Many people here would know of Bill Almdahl. Bill Almdahl is a person that many people would have known through the oil sands. Originally from Calgary, he was working up in Fort McMurray. He had a son. His name was Mike Almdahl. Mike Almdahl was a provincial road race champion two years in a row, a national team cyclist, an excellent cyclist. His skill was unbelievable. We were on the same team. I was a triathlete; he was a road racer. In Calgary he was riding along Bowness Road by Shaganappi Trail, heading toward the intersection. A car turned in front of him, cut him off, and his head hit the frame coming up the side of the door. He was in a coma for a few days, and he ended up passing away. A very sad story. The best skilled person that you could find to be on a bike doesn't have a chance against a car.

The sad part is another one of our teammates had been out for a training ride the week before, and he had a helmet on. Almost the exact same accident in a different location. He did run his head into the side of the door when he was cut off by a car. He had a helmet on. He was in the hospital for a week.

A sad loss of life that didn't have to happen. I will be supporting this legislation, so thank you for bringing it forward.

[Mr. Rathgeber rose]

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

4:50

MR. BONNER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Calder, I sure hope you get an opportunity. You've been very persistent.

Again, I certainly appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 209 in third reading, and I once again congratulate the Member for Calgary-Cross on bringing this bill forward.

When we look back in this province, Mr. Speaker, we see that initially when seat belts were introduced, they were not accepted. Today the majority of us don't think twice about strapping on our seat belt before we leave a location in our car. At one time we had a tremendous amount of resistance to wearing helmets when we rode motorcycles in this province. Today we don't have any problems with that. When we think of the range of people and the types of people that ride motorcycles, if they're quite prepared to wear

helmets, then why can't we have our children wear helmets?

A few years ago we had a law introduced in this province where children, young babies, had to be strapped into their car seats, and today in hospitals in this province they will not give up that baby to the parents unless there is an approved car seat in that car. So here we have it today that we are violating the rights of children to try and get a very worthwhile bill passed, but we didn't violate the rights of adults riding in cars or of people that wanted to ride motorcycles or of babies who were riding in car seats. Now, why can we not have protection for all members of this society?

When I look at those other examples that I have given, Mr. Speaker, we passed those laws here in this province, and we have moved on to the betterment of this society. So, as the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View said, this certainly is long overdue legislation and certainly legislation that I would again urge all members of this Assembly to pass today.

When we look at cycling in Canada, Mr. Speaker, it is the number one activity; that is, of course, when the weather co-operates. The types of risks that our cyclists are exposed to are certainly reflected by the great variety and types of bikes that they have to ride. We have to realize here as well that in Canada we have more bikes than we have cars, and whereas lately the sales of bikes have flattened out, we find that the number of miles traveled by bike in Canada has increased greatly. We use the bike more and more for transportation, but an even greater increase of use is for fitness. We also know that 2 percent of motor vehicle related deaths are bicyclists. The most serious of these injuries is to the head.

We know that bike helmets are designed for two major reasons. We look and we see that in the design of that helmet we have a hard outer cover and a very soft interior. These are built that way specifically for two reasons. One, of course, is that the hard outer shell is for instances when people are thrown off their bikes and slide along the pavement or the roadway, the gravel or whatever. The softer, thicker padding inside is put there for those occasions when the cyclist strikes some type of a fixed object, and in doing so, they have to pad the brain and prevent what could be serious injuries occurring.

MS BLAKEMAN: It collapses; doesn't it?

MR. BONNER: Yes. It does collapse.

As well, one of the recommendations that manufacturers of bike helmets have is that once you've been involved in any type of a serious blow to those helmets, we discard the helmet and get a new one.

Now, as well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross indicated that there is an 85 percent reduction in head injuries when people wear bike helmets, and there's also an 88 percent reduction in brain injuries when they are wearing helmets. It is critical that we pass this legislation. We all know that cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities that drivers have when they're on the road. We know that there are a number of organizations where bicycle helmets are mandatory if you wish to participate, and of course in any racing that is done in the United States people must wear bicycle helmets. As well, in the Olympics anybody participating must use a bike helmet. So in doing this, I don't think we are infringing upon people's rights. We are giving them an opportunity to participate in an activity where they can be very, very safe.

Now, then, as well, Mr. Speaker, we have an organization here in Edmonton called Sport Central. Sport Central provides sporting equipment to disadvantaged children free of charge. Of course, one of the pieces of equipment that they pass out – and they have just a tremendous call for these in the spring – are bicycles, but before any

child is issued a bike, the one thing they must promise is that they will wear a helmet when they ride that bike. As well, they provide that child with a helmet.

Now, are we talking about a big expense here? Absolutely not. The cost of a bike helmet today that is CSA approved is somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$10 to \$15. We can certainly get Cadillac varieties that are much more expensive than this, but it is not a big expense when people are looking at riding bikes. It is amazing that when we see people skateboarding, they have all the various safety equipment on. So, as well, I think that when we are looking at this particular issue, to expect somebody to wear a bike helmet when they're riding a bike, when they are traveling at speeds in excess of 30 miles an hour, we certainly are not doing anything out of the ordinary.

The Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute has tracked what happens with the helmet use rates when legislation is passed, and it's amazing in the United States, Mr. Speaker, that in nine out of 10 jurisdictions that have passed bicycle helmet safety legislation, the increase in the use is certainly much more, and it certainly has not impacted the use of bicycles. So we are not looking at something that's going to restrict people riding bicycles here at all.

We have also had a tremendous amount of scientific research over the past few years, and this certainly indicates, Mr. Speaker, that if we wear the right types of protective equipment when we are involved in various sporting activities, whatever they may be, then certainly the incidence of injury is going to go down and the severity of that injury is going to go down.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much consumer awareness today that society has at its fingertips. So I would urge all members to look at that scientific evidence, to realize that a bicycle helmet law in this province is long overdue, and to please vote for Bill 209. Thank you very much.

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

MR. RATHGEBER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to stand and finally get to speak in support of Bill 209. This bill is taking a necessary step in the protection of Alberta's youth.

Bicycling involves extraordinary risks which cannot be ignored. The speed that a bike can travel, even with a child on as a rider, can be well in excess of any speed required to sustain severe head or spinal cord injury in the event of any collision. In passing this bill, we will be acknowledging the inherent risks involved in cycling and informing children that these risks are never to be taken lightly. This bill and what it aims to achieve is extremely relevant in today's society and will only become an increasingly important consideration.

5:00

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has grown over the past century and has become more and more urban. There are more hazards for cyclists today and more paved surfaces that not only facilitate a much greater speed but also are far less forgiving in the event of a crash. Bicycle technology has also changed, and today's bicycles are more efficient. They can travel across far more jagged terrain and can even sustain the impact of a crash far better than bikes built during the days of our youth. There are far more recreational options for cyclists, and many are so risky that even experienced cyclists would never consider riding without a safety helmet.

Nevertheless, children often have to learn the hard way that function, safety, and responsibility must come before fashion. Although many would much rather sail over bumps and hills with the wind flowing freely through their hair, sooner or later one of

those bumps will bump back, and the price may be much dearer than only a scraped knee. In far too many instances throughout Alberta children are severely and permanently injured in falls off bicycles. What is tragic is that most of these injuries could have been avoided through the proper use of a bicycle safety helmet. The technology for bicycle helmets has also progressed in the past decade. Lighter weight yet strong, they provide minimal burden to the rider, yet in the event of a fall they provide extraordinary protection.

Mr. Speaker, bicycles are not just a harmless diversion or a toy. They are amazing machines capable of carrying people at speeds in excess of 50 kilometres per hour. Unfortunately, their capabilities are often not respected, and when there is a loss of control, a tragedy can result. Head and spine injuries have much further reaching consequences than any other type of injury. Injury to the brain can lead to behavioural problems, memory loss, and even loss of physical control. A spinal injury can be more devastating, leaving some with permanent paralysis of the lower limbs or even the entire body. Medical science cannot treat these conditions. They are irreversible by all known methods of treatment. The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure is inapplicable to this situation because brain and spinal cord injuries have no cure. In this case an ounce of prevention has a value that cannot be measured.

Mr. Speaker, when we consider the asset that we will be protecting, there is a clear responsibility on the part of this Legislature to pass Bill 209. We may save only one life or prevent one innocent child from becoming severely disabled, but that is enough incentive for me to vote in favour of this bill. With an increasingly traffic-congested and chaotic series of roadways, we must ensure the security of young cyclists. Bill 209 affirms that Alberta's youth is valuable and worth protecting.

This has been an interesting debate, Mr. Speaker, and I've listened to both sides of it. I agree with the members who are not in favour of this bill that this ought to be a parental responsibility, but the reality is that if all parents lived up to this responsibility, we would not need this bill. The fact that we see so many cases of children being taken to emergency clinics with preventable bike-related injuries means that unfortunately some parents do not measure up to that responsibility, and it's for the children involved in those situations that we need this legislation. Children might not always appreciate what we do for them in protecting their safety, but we nevertheless recognize the necessity of setting reasonable limits upon them. I feel that this bill will help Alberta parents protect their children, and I encourage all members of the Assembly to support this bill.

I thank the Member for Calgary-Cross for her hard work and efforts in sponsoring this bill, and I hope that all members will help her make this bill become law in the province of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill 209, Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001. We have all fallen off our bicycles at one time or another. We have seen and heard of others doing the same. Learning to ride a bike is a rite of passage for Alberta's youngsters, an early taste of independence from their parents. It's a part of growing up. So, too, are the cuts and scratches that come with occasionally falling off. Unfortunately, not all tumbles from bicycles are minor or harmless. In 1999 children and teens under the age of 17 made over 450 trips to Alberta emergency rooms for bicycle-related head injuries. People say that you never forget how to ride a bicycle. I hope they always

remember to wear an approved safety helmet. With roughly nine out of 10 Canadian children aged 10 to 14 riding bikes, this is something that must be taught and enforced from a very early age.

Bill 209 requires that nobody under the age of 18 shall operate or ride on a bicycle unless they are wearing a regulated bicycle safety helmet and that it is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to ensure this to the best of their abilities. In addition, this legislation would require that only safety helmets that meet the regulated specifications of the Canadian Standards Association could be bought or sold in Alberta for use by operators or passengers on bicycles.

Mr. Speaker, the wording and intent of this legislation are very clear about putting children's safety first. Bill 209 has been backed up by mountains of evidence over the years that bicycle helmets save lives and prevent injuries. In fact, helmets have been shown to reduce the likelihood of head injury by 85 percent and brain injury by 88 percent. In spite of years of educational programming promoting bicycle helmets, too many young Albertans are still not wearing helmets when bicycling. This is why the Alberta government needs to introduce and enforce mandatory bike helmet legislation.

Bill 209 is no more an impingement on the freedom of choice of youngsters or their parents or guardians than laws concerning underage drinking and seat belts. It's a matter of health and safety. Many of us know someone who has been spared death or serious head injury thanks to their bicycle helmet. I think the member for Calgary-Mountain View made that point very clearly. Believe me; these people are not worried about the cost of a good helmet or how wearing one might make them look. Surviving and realizing one's full potential in life are worth far more and look much more cool than the alternative.

One of the potential benefits of Bill 209 is that a mandatory bicycle helmet law for minors could encourage more adults to wear helmets when cycling. This is particularly true of parents or guardians who wish to lead by example while requiring their children to observe the helmet law. With such a law in effect I would not be surprised to see a drop in the number of visits to Alberta's emergency rooms by adults in addition to minors with bicycle-related head injuries.

Mr. Speaker, there are already bicycle helmet laws in Ontario and British Columbia. The laws have served these provinces well, with solid increases in the use of helmets and a decrease in bicycle-related head injuries. With Bill 209 we will be taking yet another step to ensure that our youngsters have every opportunity to grow up and become Alberta's future leaders. We owe this to them and to ourselves.

For young people cycling is a sport, a hobby, or even a job. The same is true for football and ice hockey, in which safety helmets are the norm. Granted, cycling is not a contact sport or activity. However, cyclists compete on their asphalt and concrete playing fields not only with other cyclists but with cars and trucks, that outweigh and outpace them by many times. Young cyclists must also contend with their own developing reflexes and equilibrium in addition to obstacles such as pedestrians and uneven sidewalks and roads. Collisions and falls cannot always be prevented. However, we must do everything possible to minimize the risk of serious injuries when bicycle crashes do occur. Bill 209 would be an important step in accomplishing this.

I would encourage everyone to support this bill. Thank you.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-North Hill.

5:10

MR. MAGNUS: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 209 this afternoon. You know, in listening to this debate – and I've listened fairly carefully – there have been a lot of statistics thrown about and talked about, all the good reasons for bringing this bill into place. But I think what this bill is about, plainly put, is common sense. Some people have it and some don't. I remember my mother's favourite expression was always: if you expect common sense from someone else, you haven't got any yourself. However, I would like to state that we as adults . . . [interjection] Did you guys just get that? I'm glad to see I'm waking them up now.

I'd like to state that we as adults and as lawmakers rightly or wrongly make the assumption that most children do not have the same level of common sense as adults. We see countless laws that prevent children from doing some things that adults are free to do. Laws related to the consumption of alcohol or cigarettes come to mind right off the bat. We make these laws because we don't feel that children have the requisite life experience to make fully informed decisions about the consumption of these products. We also have a little law in place that says that you can't quit school until you're 16. I have to tell you as the father of three teenagers that none of them prior to 16 wanted to go to school. They'd all quit if we didn't have that law in place. It's just another example.

Also, we look at the criminal justice system. We see that we give children lighter sentences, second chances, and the benefit of the doubt when they break the law. We do this not because their acts are objectively less harmful but because we make the assumption that most minors do not have the life experience necessary to fully understand the scope of their actions.

Part of our job as parents and as role models in society is to help educate our children about the right way to do things and the consequences of those things that they do. Mr. Speaker, what I'm trying to get at here is this. When we make this assumption, we do it in the name of protecting the safety of our children so that they can become responsible adults capable of leading their children into the future. This is really at the heart of the bill proposed by the Member for Calgary-Cross, and I would like to join the legion of fans for this member bringing this bill forward. It isn't a punishment of children; it is the introduction of a responsible measure.

I believe I have a few minutes left; don't I, Mr. Speaker?

It is, admittedly, government telling children that we know what is best for them, but if anyone here could name me a government that doesn't do this with children, I'd be very, very surprised. Our own government, which takes great pains to get out of the personal lives of citizens, often tells children what to do. We do it in the name of common sense – there's that word again: common sense – and public and personal safety. In this regard Bill 209 is a prudent step.

On the other hand, I've heard it argued that this bill tells parents how to raise their children, Mr. Speaker. Some have even gone so far as to call this bill an imposition into the personal lives of individuals, parents, and families. In response I'd like to again revert to the common sense argument. In most cases we do not have laws to tell people with common sense what to do. For the most part we have laws to protect decent people with common sense from those who do not act with that same common sense. As an 18-year-old motorcycle driver – and I won't tell you how many years ago that was – I can recall very clearly that I was not happy when the Alberta government brought in motorcycle helmet laws. On the other hand, I've had a number of experiences in my life and through people and acquaintances that I've known that have had accidents on motorcycles. Today were I to get on a motorcycle – I'd love to ride a Harley,

I have to tell you – I frankly would not get on one without that helmet. Now, that's changed over 30 years. Again, common sense.

Mr. Speaker, this may be a bold assertion, but I'll make it anyway: anyone who lets their child get on a bike without a helmet is obviously lacking in common sense. While they may have unlimited faith in their five year olds to safely navigate our streets, do they really have that much faith in everyone else to be safe around their children? In both the child and the others on the road – other bikers, other motorists, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera – there is a huge margin for error. As adults we may decide to take that risk, but we should not let our children do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my colleagues here today to exercise some of their own common sense and pass Bill 209. Thank you very much.

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

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to speak this afternoon on Bill 209, the Highway Traffic (Bicycle Safety Helmet) Amendment Act, 2001. What I'd like to do is address three questions surrounding this bill: are bicycle helmets necessary, will all Albertans be able to afford helmets for their children, and, finally, will children actually wear helmets even if the legislation exists for them to do so?

I believe that the comments my colleagues have made on this bill in the past few months and today especially as this bill has gone through the readings and through Committee of the Whole have made it clear that bicycle helmets certainly do make an enormous contribution to reducing deaths and injuries to children. It is foolish for all people and especially children not to be wearing a bicycle helmet when riding.

Just a few statistics from the United States that confirm this point one more time. Medical research shows that 85 percent of cyclists' head injuries can be prevented by using a bicycle helmet. More than 800 bicycle riders are killed each year in the United States alone, almost all in collisions with cars. Seventy-five percent of these deaths are the result of head injuries. Many other thousands of cyclists suffer less severe but still debilitating brain injuries which are far worse than the physical pain of scraped skin or even broken bones. Children can suffer permanent personality changes and learning disabilities from a brain injury. Other common long-term effects include concentration difficulties, aggressiveness, headaches, and balance problems. Imagine the anguish any parent would feel if this happened to their child. I would have to say on a personal note that I have listened to parents who have been in my constituency office who have told me stories that are reflective of exactly what I've just said.

The need for children to wear helmets is clear, but what of the concern that mandating bicycle helmets for children will cost Alberta parents money they don't have? A concern has been expressed for low-income Albertans in that the cost of a bicycle helmet can be a

significant financial challenge. In fact, Mr. Speaker, quality bicycle helmets can be purchased for as low as \$30, sometimes even less when sales are on. Some parents might object saying that \$30 is misleading because children will need many helmets as they grow up. In fact, a child needs surprisingly few helmets throughout their growth cycle. Heads do not grow nearly as much or as fast as arms or legs, and many helmets come with two or even three sets of foam fitting pads. When I say that helmet costs are only \$30, this is not to say that \$30 is not a substantial burden for some Albertans, but when this price is compared against the potential injury to a child, is there a parent who can afford not to buy a helmet for their child?

A final concern I wish to address, Mr. Speaker, is whether the bill will have an actual impact on the Alberta community resulting in more children wearing helmets. Well, similar laws passed in other jurisdictions have made a mark on helmet usage and have significantly reduced the incidence of head injury. New Jersey, for instance, passed a law calling for mandatory use of bike helmets for people under the age of 16, and after five years of enforcement New Jersey reported a 60 percent reduction in fatalities for the age group covered by the law. Many states and dozens of counties and cities have passed similar legislation in hopes of attaining these results. Of course, it's ultimately up to the child, though, to decide whether they wish to wear a helmet or not.

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Calgary-West, but Standing Order 8(5)(a)(iii) provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate. Therefore, I invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross to close debate on Bill 209.

MRS. FRITZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to close debate on Bill 209. In doing so, I sincerely want to thank all members of the Assembly who have encouraged me and guided me with their wisdom from both sides of the debate. It's been a well-balanced debate which is essential for the public to hear. I'd also like to thank, as I mentioned earlier, the staff that are here from the Stollery children's hospital and especially to thank the hon. Minister of Transportation and his staff as well for their guidance.

So I appreciate that, and with that I'm calling for the vote.

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a third time]

5:20

THE DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a very good afternoon of excellent progress once again, and I would move that we now call it 5:30 and reconvene this evening at 8.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:21 p.m.]

