

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, November 15, 2000** 1:30 p.m.  
Date: 00/11/15  
[The Speaker in the chair]

head: Prayers

THE SPEAKER: Good afternoon.

Let us pray. O Lord, guide us so that we may use the privilege given us as elected Members of the Legislative Assembly. Give us the strength to labour diligently and the courage to think and to speak with clarity and conviction and without prejudice or pride. Amen.

Colleagues, as many of you know, our colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs, hon. member Pamela Paul, has been absent from the House. You'll be glad to know that she has recovered from her eye surgery this past week and is now at home recuperating. I'm sure all of you will join with me in wishing her well in her recovery.

You might also want to congratulate the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, who is now a proud new grandfather, and it would be quite appropriate to do the normal thing. [applause]

Please be seated.

head: Presenting Petitions

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition from citizens concerned with mature and aging women's health, particularly osteoporosis.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition today. It is signed by 370 students, the students for environmental and social action, who were responding to the concerns in Kananaskis Country, students who are now very happy with the government's decision in that regard.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I'm pleased to introduce a petition signed by 311 Albertans from Edmonton, Calgary, Spruce Grove, Legal, Fort Saskatchewan, Blairmore, and Sherwood Park. They are petitioning the Assembly "to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care."

Thank you very much.

head: Reading and Receiving Petitions

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would ask that the petition I presented yesterday on mature women's health and osteoporosis now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned residents of Alberta, petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the Alberta Government to take an enlightened preventative approach and add the newer and more effective medications and therapies to the Alberta Drug List to ensure the health of an aging society.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I request that the petition I presented on the promotion of private health care by this government be now read and received.

Thank you.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would request that the petition I presented on Thursday, May 25 requesting the government to maintain Kananaskis in a natural state now be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Alberta to urge the Government of Alberta:

1. To immediately disallow any further development of the Spray Valley of Kananaskis Country, including those proposals currently under consideration;
2. To maintain Kananaskis Country in a natural state that provides high quality wildlife habitat and nature-based recreational activities;
3. To create a Wildland Provincial Park which protects the whole of the undeveloped parts of the Kananaskis and Spray Valleys.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd ask that the petition I tabled last spring regarding private health care be read and received.

THE CLERK:

We the undersigned citizens of Alberta petition the Legislative Assembly to urge the government of Alberta to stop promoting private health care and undermining public health care.

head: Tabling Returns and Reports

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Economic Development.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table with the House today five copies of the Alberta Economic Development Authority's Positioning Alberta for Continuing Success Activity Report 1999-2000.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table with the Assembly three reports today: the year 2000 annual report of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Alberta, the 1999 annual report of the Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta, and the 1999 annual report for the Appeals Commission for Alberta's Workers' Compensation.

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

MR. HANCOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I have the honour of tabling the Alberta Justice annual report 1999-2000,

the Alberta Law Enforcement Review Board's 1999 annual report for information purposes, and the annual reports of the Alberta Law Foundation and the Law Society of Alberta.

As our annual report shows, Alberta Justice is responding to the concerns of Albertans raised at the 1999 justice summit, which I might say was the brainchild of my predecessor and my colleague . . .

MR. HAVELOCK: Jon Havelock.

MR. HANCOCK: Well, I can't use that name; can I? And I don't know where you're from.

In 1999-2000 we enhanced community partnerships, increased the role of the victims. We've clarified accountability, increased funding for crime prevention initiatives, and I'm glad to report that our efforts appear to be paying off. Crime rates continue to fall in Alberta.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of the annual report on the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This report outlines the work for the past year as the council has moved to develop an Alberta disability strategy.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

MRS. MacBETH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table a letter that I have today sent to the Premier in reference to his statements in this Legislature yesterday, when he said, "This leader of the Liberal opposition was the person who licensed the very first private MRI clinic in this province." In the letter I state:

This statement is a lie.

During my term as Minister of Health, I did not license, nor approve, nor in any way encourage private MRI clinics.

In addition, it is the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta that would license a private MRI clinic, not the Government of Alberta nor the Minister of Health.

I resigned as Minister of Health . . .

THE SPEAKER: Hon. leader, thank you very much. This is Tabling Returns and Reports.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table five copies of letters from eight dedicated board members from the Youth Dance Unlimited company urging the government to have more "support for the Arts in Alberta recognizing the lasting social, educational and economic benefits to the community," five copies of eight letters.

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

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a large number of questionnaires that I'd like to table. They outline the concerns that victims of brain injury have in this province.

Thank you.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of letters that are specifically directed for the benefit of the hon.

minister of health and the associate minister dealing with concerns and shortcomings expressed by Alberta victims of brain injury and outlining difficulties with medical coverage, home care, employment, recreation, income, and so on and so forth.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to table a number of items, the first being an agenda from the External Advisory Board of the Graduate Students' Association of the University of Alberta. I have been privileged to attend this session, and I have, accompanying that agenda, enclosed two postcards which the undergraduates and the graduate students are providing and hoping people will send to the government. The postcards state, "Tuition in Alberta has risen over 208% . . ."

THE SPEAKER: Please, hon. member, let's get on with the tablings.

1:40

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So I will table those with the Assembly.

I also have today five copies of a Discussion Paper on the Attributes of a National Framework for Injury Prevention and Control. This was shared in October at a national conference on injury prevention that was held in Kananaskis.

Accompanying that, Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to table today five copies of the annual report of the Alberta Centre for Injury Control & Research, an outstanding centre which is doing vital work and deserves additional support from government.

Thank you.

MR. DICKSON: Mr. Speaker, I have but one tabling, and this is Canada's Annual Survey of Emergency Food Programs prepared for the Canadian Association of Food Banks, October 2000.

Thank you.

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

MS CARLSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have three tablings this afternoon. The first is from the Bragg Creek Environmental Coalition, who are requesting a "moratorium on all resource developments in Kananaskis Country until a watershed assessment" is conducted and its recommendations are implemented.

The second is a letter from Paul and Jean Greig, who are also concerned about Kananaskis Country.

The third is the third quarter results as reported by Bovar where they tell us how they lost \$1 million and their subsequent plans to return this plant to the government of Alberta and the people.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today, the first of which is a letter from Mr. Roy Kramar. He's a constituent of mine, and he is asking that the Capital health authority reimburse him some \$1,500 for three MRIs that were required for his neck, his back, and his head in March of this year, sir.

The second tabling, so that the government does not miss some of the important items and misinterpret a number of the statements of the market surveillance administrator, is a report filed by him to the Power Pool of Alberta on prices in the summer of 2000, sir. The five copies are herein contained.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With permission I would file five copies of *What Students Have Said*, excerpts from the 25,000 postcards delivered to the Minister of Learning earlier today by student representatives of institutions across the province asking that tuition be limited to 2 percent.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is a letter from St. Albert Protestant schools expressing their concerns over boundary changes.

The other issue is from St. Albert Protestant schools as well, expressing their concerns that unless there is stable and consistent funding for the DARE program, it will no longer be available to as many students as have been fortunate enough to get this program offered to them so far.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. Both of them are documents which I have received through freedom of information. They are relating to the treated pine shake. The first one is entitled Shake Treat Protocol. It is recommendations for pressure preservative treatment.

The second document, Mr. Speaker, is Treated Pine Shake Inspection Report from the manufacturers, Skyline, Majestic, Shakemaster, and Cowley. This is not a very good record, I'm afraid, to announce to all members of the Assembly.

Thank you.

head: Introduction of Guests

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Speaker.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, I'm delighted to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Miss Clair Sparrius of East London, South Africa. Clair is an exchange student with the Rotary Club of High River. She is seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I'd ask her now to rise and receive the warm, traditional welcome of the Assembly.

And the second introduction, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly councillors from the MD of Willow Creek: Councillor Brian Dahl from the constituency of Highwood and councillors Dave Claypool and Kelly Donahue from the constituency of Livingstone-Macleod. They are seated in the members' gallery, and I would now ask them to rise and receive the warm, traditional welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. DUNFORD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you today to the members of the Assembly Manuella Peel from Onoway, Alberta. Mrs. Peel is the mother of Dwight Peel, a young man who was killed in a workplace incident on June 27, 1998, just two days after his 17th birthday. I met with Mrs. Peel earlier today to discuss how we can educate employers and young people on the importance of ongoing safety in the workplace. We must educate and protect our young and inexperienced workers. With Mrs. Peel today is her sister Mary Anne Munn from Calahoo. I would ask Mrs. Peel and her sister to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. LOUGHEED: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly two classes from James Mowat elementary school in Fort Saskatchewan. They're accompanied by teachers Ted Fellows and George Sebest and also parents Mrs. Cunningham, Mrs. Prochinsky, Mrs. Lequire, Mr. Arnott, Mrs. DeBruyn, Mrs. Regush and by Mr. Fluker, the bus driver. If they'd please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a great group of students from Archbishop MacDonald high school in Edmonton. There are 57 visitors here. They are with their teachers, Mrs. Jane Warren and Mrs. Phyllis Schumacher, and I would ask them to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three very special ladies from the Lac La Biche-St. Paul constituency. We have Mrs. Helen Broadbent and Mrs. Judy Thompson. They are here today because their husbands are councillors for Lakeland county, and they are at the AAMD and C convention in Edmonton. They are accompanied today by my wife, Juliette. I would like to ask all the ladies to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly 13 special guests from Vulcan county. We've got five guests in the members' gallery and eight in the public gallery, and I would ask if they would rise as I introduce them. In the members' gallery are the administrator, Robert Strauss, Councillor Ian Donovan, Councillor Grant Lahd, Councillor Merle Wyatt, who's also one of the newest councillors elected, and the public works supervisor, Nick Zubach. In our public gallery are Reeve Wayne Davey, another new councillor, Charlene Shearer, Glenn Logan, Councillor Darryl McDonald, Councillor Doug McIntyre, and Councillor Rod Ruark. Along with them are two spouses, Brenda McIntyre and Mr. Wayne Shearer. I'm pleased to introduce them to the Assembly. Please give them a warm welcome.

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

MRS. SLOAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Later this afternoon we will be joined by 41 guests from Our Lady of Victories school here in the City of Edmonton. I had the pleasure last week of visiting with these 35 students. They are accompanied today in this Assembly by their teachers, Mr. Dave King and Mrs. Margaret Petruk, as well as parents Sandy Fitzgerald, Shelley Hunt, and Caren Pierchajlo. I would ask that all members provide these students with a warm welcome this afternoon.

Thank you.

1:50

MR. DOERKSEN: Mr. Speaker, I have two long-term residents of Red Deer to introduce to you and members of the Assembly today. The first is Shirley Alford, who is a former principal of Mount View elementary school as well as an educator at Red Deer College. The second person I'd like to introduce is Burns Peacock. This is actually his first visit to the Legislature, but he is one of six brothers to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to the Members of the Legislative Assembly 21 students and two teachers that will be joining us shortly I suspect. They are from McArthur elementary school, and they were brought today to the Assembly for a tour and a photograph by their teachers and group leaders, Ms Sas and Mr. Jerry Bernard. I hope that the Assembly will welcome them warmly when they do arrive.

Thank you, sir.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. BRODA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly one individual very important to me, my daughter Susan. She's a nurse officer on a Norwegian cruise ship, and she works in the Caribbean and is leaving in the next couple of weeks to go back there again. She is seated in the members' gallery, and I would ask her to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three Edmonton members of the Alberta College and Technical Institute Students' Executive Council, the Alberta Graduate Council, the Council of Alberta University Students. They are Leslie Church, chair of the Council of Alberta University Students; Naomi Agard, vice-president external of the University of Alberta Students' Union; and Brad Wuetherick, executive vice-president of the Graduate Students' Association at the University of Alberta. They are here today representing over 100,000 students in the province and delivered earlier in the day 25,000 postcards to the Minister of Learning asking that tuition be limited to a 2 percent increase in the coming year. With your permission I would ask them to rise and to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Chairman of Committees.

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce some guests from the Lacombe-Stettler constituency. With us today are 10 hard-working members of the Eagles youth council, a self-advocacy group mandated under the auspices of the Lacombe Action Group for the Handicapped. With them are helpers Ms Shara Hargreaves, Mrs. Sharon Dilworth, Mrs. Lynne Kilpatrick, and Ms Marisa Jackson. I had the opportunity recently to attend one of their council meetings and was most impressed. I would ask that they rise in the members' gallery and receive the warm, traditional welcome of the Assembly.

head: Oral Question Period

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

### Electric Utilities Deregulation

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Utilicorp Networks Canada has just applied to the Energy and Utilities Board for a 31.6 percent increase in the delivery charge for its residential customers in southern Alberta for 2001, this on top of an earlier increase that was pulled back. Enmax and EPCOR have already increased their electricity rates for residential customers this year. It's now clear to everyone except this government that the Klein energy policy, or the KEP, the made-in-Klein Alberta price for electricity, is hitting consumers and businesses hard in the pocketbook. My questions are to the Premier. Why does the Premier continue to misinform Albertans when he says that electricity rates will be going down in 2001 under the Klein electricity policy when clearly prices are going up for consumers, whether they be residential, industrial, or commercial?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, as I explained yesterday, this is a situation that is not peculiar to Alberta. Electricity prices are increasing, indeed, worldwide. The good thing is that because of our prudent fiscal management and because of the electricity pool, we are able to reduce every household electricity bill by \$20 starting January 1. So this increase to which the leader of the Liberal opposition alludes would result in about a \$10 a month increase. That is a cash increase on the average household bill. With the \$20 rebate the consumer is still about \$10 ahead.

If the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition requires further clarification relative to this very generous rebate, I will have him expand.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier confirm that the increase in electricity rates for southern Alberta residential consumers in 2001 will in fact eat up and consume more than his paltry onetime credit on their utility bills?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the hon. leader of the Liberal opposition construes to be paltry, but \$840 on average to the average householder in Alberta is not paltry. It's not paltry to me: \$840. Maybe she's in a different income bracket than many of us, and maybe it's paltry to her, but to most Albertans \$840 on average is not a paltry sum and will go a long way – a long way – to alleviating the rising costs of electricity.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, will the Premier then stand up in this Legislature and guarantee residential customers served by Utilicorp that electricity prices will not go up by 15 percent in 2001 because of the Klein electricity policy?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, nothing in life is guaranteed, and what I would like to point out is that these electricity rate increases have occurred under a totally regulated environment, a totally regulated environment. We are not yet in deregulation. Quite simply, when that power comes onstream – we know that there are two cogen plants about to come on stream, one at Joffre and the other at Suncor. There are proposals now to bring more coal generation power onstream, about 1,400 megawatts of new power plus additional transmission capacity.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, as I pointed out, it's a situation that is not peculiar to Alberta, and secondly, this is a manifestation of the

tremendous economic growth that we are experiencing in this province. It's estimated that there are something like \$50 billion – \$50 billion – worth of new projects onstream. There are people moving to this province in droves, as the hon. Provincial Treasurer pointed out. They don't bring their roads and their hospitals and other facilities with them. We have to accommodate this growth, and rising electricity costs are one of the consequences of meeting the demands of growth. It's that simple.

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

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, about two hours ago the state of California declared a crisis in their state. This state also had done deregulation, and they're now paying as much as \$200 per megawatt hour off the grid to supply the residents and businesses of the state of California. Yesterday the Premier claimed and has repeated here today that deregulation of electricity had not occurred and that Albertans are apparently still living in some regulated environment under the Klein energy policy. This Premier and his government are so desperate to avoid taking responsibility for skyrocketing electricity bills that they are now trying to deny the impact of their own legislation. My question, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier.

THE SPEAKER: There's a bit of preamble in there. We're coming to the question? Please, finish the question.

2:00

MRS. MacBETH: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Is the Premier telling Albertans that his government has deliberately allowed the price of electricity to increase by 700 percent at the wholesale level in four years under his government-regulated environment?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, this is a function of the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board relative to the regulation and approval of rate increases. The leader of the Liberal opposition knows that as well as anyone else. This government, the Executive Council, or the caucus of this government, does not set power rates, and she knows that. To stand up there and try to imply that this government sets power rates is false. It is absolutely false. It is untrue, and the leader of the Liberal opposition should stand up and apologize for making a false statement.

Relative to the situation in California as it compares to Alberta, I'll have the hon. Minister of Resource Development respond. But I would like to point out before I ask him to respond, Mr. Speaker – and I'll use the case of my own condominium here in Edmonton. My last power bill, I think, with the rate increase was about \$26. Now, as of January 1, with a \$20 rebate, I'll be paying \$6 a month. That is not a lot to pay for power. Because of prudent fiscal management we were able to do that. Now, if she thinks there's something wrong with that, stand up and say so.

I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

THE SPEAKER: Actually, hon. Minister of Resource Development, events in California are not within the administrative competence of the Minister of Resource Development. Supplementary.

MRS. MacBETH: Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier is apparently contradicting himself. Can he tell this Assembly what are we in right now, a regulated or deregulated or re-regulated market?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely astounded by the lack of knowledge displayed by the leader of the Liberal opposition. You

know, the whole program of deregulation has been ongoing now – for what? – three, four, five years, and it's been stated time and time and time again that a deregulated environment for those who want to be deregulated takes place January 1, the year 2001. For those who want to remain in a regulated environment, they have the option of doing so, I believe, for five years.

I'll have the hon. minister supplement.

MR. CARDINAL: Thank you very much. I think that what we need to clarify, Mr. Speaker, is that over a million residential homes and residential farms have the option to stay under the regulated system for five years. In addition to that, over 124,000 customers who are commercial, industrial, and municipal and who use less than 250,000 kilowatt hours of electricity also have an option to stay up to three years. So the system is working well.

MRS. MacBETH: Mr. Speaker, given that electricity rates have gone up under regulation and are going up under deregulation, will the Premier admit that the Klein energy policy means higher electricity rates for consumers?

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm so very flattered that she would allude to this policy as the Klein energy policy, because when people get their electricity bills, when the households throughout this province get their electricity bills as of January 1 and they see a \$20 reduction – as I said, in my own case relative to my condominium here, when my bill goes from \$26 down to \$6, I would be very, very happy to say: this is all the result of the Klein energy policy.

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

### Seniors' Benefits

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, many condominium owners are senior citizens, and under the recently proclaimed condominium act thousands of owners are making extra payments on top of their condominium fees to meet the condo reserve requirements. On top of that, they're being hit with huge increases in their electricity and natural gas bills. My first questions are to the Minister of Resource Development. Given that unlike the government seniors like to plan ahead, exactly how are they to pay their bills when the electricity rebate program ends 13 months from now?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, what I've indicated is that we will continue monitoring the situation and make adjustments accordingly. I don't want to predict today what will happen a year from now. I don't think that is a wise move. Electricity rates could come down, or they may go up some. In order to make a wise decision when we're spending taxpayers' dollars, it has to be done properly. You can be guaranteed that this ministry will continue monitoring the situation and making adjustments accordingly.

In relation to seniors, Mr. Speaker, there are programs right now under Community Development that can address these issues. They're under the special-needs assistance program. The appropriate minister may want to make additional comments.

THE SPEAKER: Well, actually we're going to recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, but, you know, it's almost impossible for anybody to look down 13 months. *Beauchesne* 428 covers these things and a whole series of exemptions. Please proceed with your supplemental.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you. To this same Minister of Resource Development: will a high-rise condominium that is not individually metered be treated as a high-rise apartment and receive the commercial rebate?

MR. CARDINAL: Mr. Speaker, the rebate will be received. In addition to that, the department staff are also working with a group to ensure that individuals who need the rebate will get it, so we'll continue working on that.

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My final question was to be to the Minister of Community Development. Perhaps I could address it instead to the Premier. Could the Premier answer this? In helping seniors cope with these rising utility rates, will this government now eliminate health care insurance premiums for seniors and index the Alberta seniors' cash benefit to the inflation rate to help them pay these utility bills, as suggested by the minister?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, relative to health care premiums as those premiums relate to seniors, I would point out that the threshold at which seniors are required to pay health care premiums is fairly high indeed. In other words, this government's policy was to assess health care premiums on those seniors who could afford to pay. I would remind the hon. member that most seniors in this province are below that threshold, pay very little in health care premiums, and many, I would venture to say most, pay no premiums whatsoever.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. deputy leader of the third party. [applause]

### **Electric Utilities Deregulation** (continued)

MR. MASON: Thank you very much, but I hope you're not going to thump on that side when I'm done.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Premier claimed that the recent dramatic increases in power rates were taking place due to a regulated system. Until April of this year I was a shareholder representative in one of the three largest power companies in Alberta, and I saw firsthand how the uncertainty created over the last five years by this government interfered with decisions to invest in new power generation. My question is to the Premier. Has the government done any research at all into the effects of their misguided deregulation scheme on electricity rates, supply, or reliability?

2:10

MR. KLEIN: Well, Mr. Speaker, I must say that I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed that the hon. member doesn't know the amount of time and effort that has gone into this. As confirmed by the Liberal opposition, indeed this has been going on now for five years, tremendous consultation with the energy industry, including the corporation to which the hon. member belonged – and I believe that was EPCOR – tremendous consultation with EPCOR, with Trans-Alta, with ATCO, with numerous companies that were interested in cogeneration, with wind power generators, with cities like Medicine Hat that also use gas to generate electricity, with the stakeholder groups, a tremendous amount of research. Five years' worth of research has gone into the program to deregulate the energy industry in this province.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier did not answer the

question, which was: has the government done any research at all into their plan? He simply said that they've taken five years. Well, if they'd taken 10 years, the lights would be out all over the province.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, the lights are on.

Again, I have to repeat that, yes, there are rising electricity costs. Those costs would have risen in a deregulated or a regulated environment. As I pointed out earlier, this is a manifestation of tremendous economic growth unparalleled in this country.

I would remind the hon. member that the corporation to which he belonged, EPCOR, was one of the strongest proponents of deregulation.

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has also claimed that electricity prices are rising all over the world, but in our two neighbouring provinces, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, prices are frozen and will remain frozen next year, as well. So why did the Premier then claim . . . [interjections] I'm sort of accustomed to being allowed to ask questions with some silence. Am I not entitled to that here, Mr. Speaker?

### **Speaker's Ruling** **Oral Question Period Rules**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. member, not only have you been recognized; you are most certainly entitled to raise a question. But I would like to remind the hon. member that he cannot initiate debate without proper notice of motion. This is called the question period.

Please proceed.

### **Electric Utilities Deregulation** (continued)

MR. MASON: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Why, then, doesn't the Premier admit that in adjacent provinces, who are making a killing selling power to us now, there are stable and low electricity prices? It's called the NDP advantage.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Speaker, there is no NDP advantage; I'll tell you that.

Here's the CIBC report which says that they lay much of the blame for B.C.'s economic performance on the feet of the province's New Democratic government, which instituted economic policies that often stand in contrast to those of Alberta. This report by the CIBC says that it's unlikely now that B.C., with a population of 1 million people more than Alberta, will ever, ever surpass Alberta again as long as an NDP government is in power.

Mr. Speaker, power in British Columbia I understand – I stand to be corrected – was doubled, then frozen. The B.C. government has nothing to do with power in B.C. The simple fact is that they have water, tonnes and tonnes of water that flows and flushes down the west slope and is able to generate cheap power, unlike a landlocked Alberta, which is dependent upon primarily coal and to some degree natural gas and to some degree wind. Very little power in this province is generated by water. The same is true for Manitoba.

I'm going to talk about one other ND province that is facing the same situation as Alberta, and indeed the rates are going higher and higher and higher and higher in NDP Saskatchewan.

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

### **Postsecondary Tuition Fees**

MRS. JABLONSKI: Mr. Speaker, many of Alberta's postsecondary

students are facing rising tuition costs. My questions are for the Minister of Learning. Given the ongoing concerns raised by students, will the Minister of Learning consider a freeze on tuition?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That is an excellent question. Over the past two to three months I've been talking with ACTISEC, I've been talking with CAUS, I've been talking with the Graduate Students' Association as well as the chairmen of the boards of governors of the universities and colleges to come up with a consensus on the tuition fee issue. Tuition fees have been projected to increase. That is directly related to the amount of dollars that we give to the universities. I feel that the best way to approach this issue is to work with the universities, with the colleges and allow them, by giving them more money for their budgets, to decrease the amount of tuition fees.

Mr. Speaker, in some universities and some colleges in this province the tuition increase has been zero percent. I don't want to change that.

The other point that I will make, Mr. Speaker, is that in a newspaper article last week there was announced a potential 5.7 percent increase at the University of Alberta. That is unacceptable. I have talked to the University of Alberta officials at this time, and we will come up with an agreement on this.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Mr. Speaker, what is the minister's response to students who say that Alberta students now pay more than the national average?

DR. OBERG: Another excellent question. If I may, I'll refer to a document called the Scholarship Consultants of North America, which is a nonprofit organization. On the 25th of July it put out the Guide to University Costs in Canada. Mr. Speaker, if you'll give me a little bit of time I'll talk about the three things that it says.

First of all, they're absolutely right on the tuition and fees. What it states is that in Alberta we are third highest in the country when it comes to tuition and fees. Mr. Speaker, to say tuition alone is not indicative of what is actually paid. The other interesting point is that when you add in tuition and fees, room and board, and books and supplies, or the total cost of a student going to university, all of a sudden we're down to fifth in provincial average. The University of Alberta is 21st out of 42 universities. The University of Calgary is 22nd. The University of Lethbridge is 23rd out of 42 universities in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, we do have the third highest provincial average, but again I say that tuition is but one aspect, one element of student debt, and we are working very actively to decrease student debt.

MRS. JABLONSKI: Mr. Speaker, what is the minister doing to ensure that all students have access to postsecondary education?

2:20

DR. OBERG: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, I could go on on this topic for the next half an hour, but I know you wouldn't want to do that.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to infrastructure, the hon. Minister of Infrastructure just put in \$210 million to expand the physical access for students in Alberta. The access fund provides for an extra 1,200 students per year each year on the student loan side in this budget. In this budget this year we increased the student loans by 22 percent. We will increase them by 50 percent over the

next three years. Those are huge increases. Access is the thing that is most important when it comes to university, because we want our students going to university, and as a government we follow through on that promise.

### Child Welfare

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, my questions are for the Minister of Children's Services. Does the minister believe that the principles enunciated in the Victims of Crime Act, section 2, that "victims should be treated with courtesy and compassion and with respect for their dignity and privacy," applies to proceedings involving child welfare?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, that is not a piece of legislation that I'm familiar with, but I can say that we believe that in every case dealing with children and child welfare, we treat them with dignity and respect, and we similarly treat their families with dignity and respect.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Speaker, can the minister defend the departmental stance that forces victims of abuse to testify in public proceedings even when such testimony is harmful to the victim's well-being?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, it is our obligation to protect victims. We do that through the Child Welfare Act. We do our utmost to protect victims of any type of abuse. In terms of presenting their case in court, there are times when the child will have an opportunity to challenge the fact that the child welfare director may not have illustrated cause – I give you the example of the illustration with PCHIP – should they choose to represent themselves.

MRS. SLOAN: Can the minister confirm how many statements of claim have been filed citing that the department of child welfare and the government of Alberta have failed to act on allegations of child abuse?

MS EVANS: Mr. Speaker, if such record exists – and I am very confident that we can determine what information is available – I will table that in the House forthwith. I do not have that information with me today.

### Persons with Developmental Disabilities

MRS. GORDON: Mr. Speaker, last year the Associate Minister of Health and Wellness undertook a comprehensive review of the programs and services available in Alberta for persons with developmental disabilities. This review was prompted by parents and family members, by PDD recipients, and by community agencies who are very concerned about issues related to funding, mandate, eligibility criteria, wage compensation, and numerous other issues. Recently I had the privilege of attending a well-run meeting of the Eagles council, a self-advocacy group made up of PDD recipients. My questions are to the Associate Minister of Health and Wellness. Mr. Minister, what specifications have been taken in response to the many concerns that were expressed regarding the provision of services for PDD recipients?

THE SPEAKER: The Associate Minister of Health and Wellness.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, there are a number of initiatives that have occurred as a result of the extensive and very comprehensive provincewide review that I was pleased to undertake last year. For example, with respect to stabilizing the funding base, I'm very pleased to tell everyone that we have

increased funding to this area of PDD from \$283 million a year ago to over \$321 million this year.

Secondly, in September of this year I was very pleased to announce the Alberta brain injury initiative, which includes a provincewide consultation and a forum. That, by the way, is guided by a group of community-based coalition action members who will develop a policy framework for us very shortly. They'll bring that forward in the form of a concrete action plan very early in the new year, and we will enact what we can to assist adults with an acquired brain injury from there.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would add that perhaps the most significant thing in relation to one specific recommendation on workforce retention and wages is that on October 30 of this year I was very pleased to announce an increase of \$24 million, which will go to the frontline workers that are employed by community agencies in this province. That is going to tremendously help. That will help to stabilize the workforce that is engaged in providing services and programs for persons with developmental disabilities, and I sincerely hope it will also attract new people into that profession, because it's very important. The end recipients of PDD programs will be the primary beneficiaries along with their families.

MRS. GORDON: How will you ensure that the recently announced wage increases for community agencies will indeed reach the frontline caregivers as you intended?

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Mr. Speaker, that's a very, very good question. Let me just explain that each jurisdiction has a legal contract or some type of grant with conditions or some form of other legal agreement which allows funding to flow from our PDD boards to the community agencies who are the actual employers of the PDD workers. In order to ensure that those PDD funds flow to the intended frontline workers, we do have a monitoring process that is in accordance with those legal agreements through which we track those particular types of expenditures.

For example, the PDD program requires and then it also reviews audited financial statements from each of these community contracted agencies. We also have under the individual funding arrangements the ability for PDD boards to perform audits on salary records with respect to local service providers. So we feel confident that by following these procedures, these mechanisms, those particular increases will reach the frontline workers as intended.

I just want to stress that those frontline workers are not government employees. They are employees of the contracted agencies. We have a good spirit of co-operation in working with them in that regard.

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

MRS. GORDON: Thank you. When I attended the Eagles meeting, the general membership indicated that transportation is an issue. Thus, Mr. Minister, will your department and our government consider undertaking a comprehensive review of all transportation requirements needed by PDD recipients?

THE SPEAKER: Hon. minister.

MR. ZWOZDESKY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, accessing adequate and appropriate transportation is obviously a very important issue to our PDD recipients and to all members of the disability community, particularly so for those who live in areas where public transportation may not be as readily accessible and available as elsewhere. However, when someone specifically needs

transportation to access a PDD-funded service or to access some form of employment support or whatever it is they wish to access, transportation costs can be covered through our PDD funding support program. Our PDD community boards at the very moment, in fact, are working with local authorities on transportation issues such as have been identified.

I would just quickly add, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is also reviewing this matter. In fact, they're reviewing it as we speak. The results of that review, which is being carried out on a very comprehensive study basis, of personal supports will be available as an interim report within a few weeks, and I'll be very happy to bring it back and share it with the member and with her guests who are here from the Lacombe-Stettler area.

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

### Postsecondary Tuition Fees

*(continued)*

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nine thousand dollars in private debt, \$3,000 in government student loans, two jobs in the summer, two years in university: this is a quote from one of the postcards that was delivered to the Minister of Learning earlier today, and my questions are to that minister. Why in an era of billion dollar surpluses does the government continue to pursue a tuition cap policy that leaves students debt ridden?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Learning.

DR. OBERG: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that in my reply to the previous question I was asked, I outlined the issue as to where we stand in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, quite frankly this government believes that we in Alberta have a responsibility to ourselves for our postsecondary education as well. Presently the taxpayer foots the bill for roughly 75 percent of the actual costs of going to university. Seventy-five percent is a lot of dollars. As I stated earlier, we are ranked third in the country when it comes to tuition fees, but our universities are ranked 21, 22, and 23 out of 42 universities in the country when it comes to actual costs.

2:30

Mr. Speaker, we've increased the student loan programs by 22 percent this year. We've increased it by 50 percent over the last three years. That is a tremendous amount of dollars that are going to those kids that really need the help.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the same minister. Why does the government continue to offload debt onto Alberta students? That's what this is.

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, we do not offload debt. As a matter of fact, the amount of debt has gone down significantly within the last year. The average debt for any student last year was \$12,500. It has decreased to \$11,500.

When there are people out there who cannot afford to go to university, we help them significantly. Under our student loan program, Mr. Speaker, a person can benefit from over \$40,000 in student loans and only pay back \$20,000 for a four-year program. That \$20,000 is the Canadian government's student loan, which has



no remission program. That's their Liberal cousins that do not give any remission. We're the ones who give remission to students.

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

DR. MASSEY: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Given that the student loan program accounts for only a portion – only a portion – of many students' indebtedness, when will the government and this minister stop promoting the myth that the remission program adequately caps student debt? It's a myth.

DR. OBERG: Mr. Speaker, again, I will quote from the study by the nonprofit organization that looks at actual costs. In Alberta at the University of Alberta it's \$10,196 per year. That includes tuition and fees, room and board, and books and supplies. Our student loan program provides more than \$10,000 per year for these students. Again, I say the obvious. We give remission in Alberta. The Canadian federal government gives no remission on their student loans. When someone takes out \$40,000 in student loans, \$20,000 of it is remitted from the province of Alberta, not the federal Liberal government.

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

#### **Workers' Compensation Review**

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Now, I understand that the minister has received the final reports from two separate WCB review committees. Would the minister share when he plans on releasing these reports to the participants and to the general public?

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

MR. DUNFORD: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, in fact, in the interest of trying to ensure that injured workers were dealt with in a fair and expeditious manner, I did set up two committees to report on WCB claims. The first one, chaired by the Member for Red Deer-South, was what we called the MLA/WCB service review committee. What we wanted there was to have a look at the actual service that was being provided by the workers' compensation organization.

The second one, of course, was to look at the Appeals Commission as it related to the Workers' Compensation Board. You might remember that this was chaired by a retired judge, Samuel Friedman.

I have received both of those reports. We're currently reviewing the recommendations, and on Monday next, November 20, we'll be releasing both reports in their entirety.

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

MR. HERARD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplemental to the same minister: would the minister outline the process that he plans to use for approval and implementation of the significant policy and legislative changes that are being recommended in those reports?

MR. DUNFORD: What we'll do, Mr. Speaker, upon the release of the reports, first of all, is to ensure that as many people in Alberta that want to avail themselves of the report will have an opportunity

to do that. While I'm not going to go into a full consultation process, because I think that has been done with the two committees, certainly as the minister responsible for the legislation, I'll then accept feedback on those reports. I'd anticipate providing until the end of this year or early into next year to hear that type of feedback.

MR. HERARD: My last question to the same minister: since all hon. members on both sides of the House continue to hear from injured workers with serious problems with respect to their dealings with the WCB, when can these workers expect to hear something encouraging, something positive, some good news with respect to these reports?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, I think that'll happen in a couple of ways, Mr. Speaker. First of all, with the public release of the reports there'll be some encouragement on the part of all Albertans but particularly injured workers in terms of the recommendations that have been forthcoming. Of course, certainly I'm available, then, to hear their particular comments on that. Then as we move forward, while I don't have any direct responsibility in terms of the day-to-day operation as the act currently stands, if there are recommendations that are to be accepted that lead to legislative or regulatory change, of course we will use the processes of this government and this House to deal with that.

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

#### **Labour Market Development Program**

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General in his 1999-2000 report on the Alberta Department of Human Resources and Employment revealed that a pilot audit of 10 percent of educational institutions that provide basic education, upgrading, postsecondary, and apprenticeship instruction under the skills development program showed significant overpayments by the department. I received, through freedom of information a list of these contracts. My questions this afternoon are for the Minister of Human Resources and Employment. Can the minister tell this House how much of that money went to the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce?

MR. DUNFORD: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member, indeed, is correct in the sense that the Auditor General did make comments on the labour market development program, especially as it led to skills development programs. We have undertaken an audit internally based on that particular advice we received from the Auditor General.

Then there was a request from the hon. member under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and when we calculated what it would take to comply with that particular request, then I think in a spirit of willingness to examine the situation, we offered an opportunity for the member to receive the list of contracts that we had had and to make a choice of those that he wanted to look into.

This is the first notice I've had since that agreement was made with the hon. member that there are any particular cases that he wishes to examine further. He's now put the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce on the map, so we'll have to look at that.

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

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also to the Minister

of Human Resources and Employment: can the minister tell this House exactly how much money was given to the Red Deer Chamber of Commerce and what programs it was spent on? This is money from your department. Are you telling the House you have no control over your department?

MR. DUNFORD: So here we have the hon. member playing the political game. He asks us for some information, and we supply that information to him. It was my understanding under the agreement that he would provide us with a list of contracts that he wanted to see, and we would in fact supply those contracts, and I stand here today still committed to that particular agreement.

What we find now is that the hon. member has decided that — there is a list of I think over a thousand contracts that were provided to him, and now there is one which he wishes to have further examined. I want to make the commitment to the hon. member. We, of course, will in fact examine that contract, but we also provided him the opportunity to name 225 contracts, so I would expect to hear of the other 224 whenever you find it convenient. If you wish to use question period to do it, that'll be just fine with me.

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

2:40

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Also to the hon. Minister of Human Resources and Employment: considering that this list was compiled on August 10 of this year, why won't you release this information this afternoon for everyone in the Assembly?

MR. DUNFORD: That was not part of the request, Mr. Speaker. I find it very interesting that the hon. member would be taking this tack. We, of course, believe that the . . . Hon. member, I'm talking to you. I'm trying to answer your question.

MR. MacDONALD: And I'm listening.

MR. DUNFORD: That's good.

THE SPEAKER: Actually, we all talk through the Speaker.

MR. DUNFORD: Sorry.

The information that we have provided to the hon. member is considered by me to be public information. We believed that the hon. member was acting either on his own behalf or perhaps even on behalf of the Liberal caucus. It doesn't make any difference to us. We believed that he was serious and was concerned about what he was doing. We find out today that maybe there were other motives afoot, and that's fine. We understand him to be a politician, and we are starting to understand just what kind of politician he really is.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fort, followed by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

### **Irrigation Canal Drowning in Calgary**

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently there was a tragic accident when two very young Albertans drowned in the irrigation canal in Calgary. On behalf of the Legislature I visited the family and expressed our condolences. My question today is to the hon. Minister of Environment. Can the minister provide insight into this tragic situation?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, there are no easy answers when a tragic event such as this occurs. However, staff of Alberta Environ-

ment have done a thorough review of the situation and the circumstances as near as can be determined up to this incident occurring. As the people in Calgary of course are aware and others might be apprised, the western irrigation canal runs through several kilometres of eastern and southern Calgary. It is a canal which is there to facilitate drainage and water supply in Calgary. It's paralleled by a riding path for bicycles or for walking, and also on one side is one of the mainline railways. There is a fence, but the fence has many openings in it for intersections and so forth, so there was the opportunity for access by two young people. Unfortunately, they may have entered through one of those natural openings or through a hole that seemed to have been cut in the fence on one side.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, the department is investigating this thoroughly. We do take it seriously and are doing everything we can to make recommendations to prevent such an event occurring in the future.

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

MR. CAO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My first supplementary question is also to the same minister. What action is Alberta Environment taking to avoid such tragedies occurring in the future?

MR. JONSON: Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, there has been an overall investigation of the situation, which involved looking at the physical characteristics of the area including the canal, the fence, the access to the canal that is available there. Alberta Environment will, after completing its consultation and contacts with the city of Calgary and with others directly affected, be coming forward with a report and recommendations. It's my understanding that that report is now in draft form and will be double-checked with the people who have provided information and so forth and will be considered for release in the near future.

MR. CAO: My second supplementary is also to the minister. The minister said that there's an audit report in the near future. When would we expect that then?

MR. JONSON: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, it's my information that a draft report will be available shortly. I expect that it will be available next week, and we will review that particular report. I with my officials will look at it and examine it as to whether we feel that there should be further follow-up, whether there are questions that possibly could be answered that haven't been answered. Once that review has taken place, following that, there will certainly be an announcement of the results of the report.

### **head: Reading and Receiving Petitions**

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, I've noticed that today there'll be four hon. members participating in Recognitions, and we will proceed to this particular part of the Routine 30 seconds from now.

Hon. members, before calling on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to participate in Recognitions, let me just provide some recognitions as well in terms of kudos to a number of members here today who participated in Oral Question Period. The documents and the books we have of course are filled with all the rules that we have and the guides that we have, but I would like to point out by way of kudo today the exchange between the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview and the hon. Minister of Children's Services. All the rules were followed. Three questions and three responses were given in two minutes.

To the hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont and the hon. Minister of

Human Resources and Employment, all the rules were followed. Three questions and three responses were provided in four minutes. At that particular pace we would have almost a doubling of the number of questions and answers that we have in the Assembly. So there is some good reading that people might want to look at tonight and tomorrow.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

### **Osteoporosis**

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize November as Osteoporosis Month. Osteoporosis is a degenerative disease that affects more than 200,000 Alberta taxpayers, 150,000 of which are women. In fact, few people are aware that more women die from osteoporotic fractures than from breast and all other gynecological cancers combined. As the percentage of our population which are seniors increases in this province, osteoporosis is going to become more and more relevant as a public health concern.

Osteoporosis is not a normal part of aging. It is a preventable disease. Identifying those people most at risk is actually relatively simple if the proper measures are in place. While the majority of money spent on osteoporosis is dedicated to short- and long-term treatment, prevention is really the cornerstone to managing this disease.

2:50

As Osteoporosis Month proceeds, this is an opportunity for us to educate ourselves and others about this serious disease and to reassess how we address its prevention and treatment.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize the mature women's health network at the Grey Nuns hospital and in particular Dr. Patricia Bayne and Shelly Haugen for continuing to raise awareness and for helping to keep me on top of this issue.

Thank you.

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

### **Vanderwell Heritage Place**

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Seniors Advisory Council for Alberta held their most creative Senior Citizens' Week event contest for 2000, and as chair of the council I'm very pleased to announce to this House today that the winner is the Vanderwell Heritage Place lodge in Slave Lake.

Slave Lake held not just one creative event but a whole week's worth. The event was nonstop: a stew and bannock supper cooked by the Native Counseling Services of Alberta; a hotdog and ice cream lunch with a local grade 4 class; local celebrities coming daily to serve lunch at the lodge, including the Slave Lake mayor, staff sergeant, and local officials; students competing for lunch with the seniors by drawing pictures, writing letters, or making handicrafts; and the kids' dance studio transporting seniors by van to a studio recital and home again. Since then celebrities have joined the seniors in a rockathon to raise funds for a handicraft supplies cabinet at the lodge.

Slave Lake, you are truly a winning community through appreciation of your seniors. Congratulations.

Thank you.

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

### **Capilano Elementary School**

MR. MacDONALD: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I

would like to recognize Capilano elementary school, Earth school 2000. Capilano achieved Earth school status in 1996, the first Edmonton public school to do so. It meant that the school, staff, parents, and community completed 1,000 environmental projects. This was a remarkable accomplishment for a very small school, less than 150 students.

Capilano school has now successfully become an Earth 2000 school. Everyone undertook projects: individual students, small groups, classrooms, and staff members. The alpha students, as part of their life skills program, gathered recycling boxes around the school and sorted materials. Within the community families challenged other families to meet or beat their total number of recycling activities. One family even had a birthday party at which children created space costumes from recycled materials. By October 13 the school had more than met its goal.

Capilano is only the third school in Canada to have accomplished this double Earth feat. A globe is symbolic, Mr. Speaker, of double Earth school status. The students of Capilano school challenge all Alberta students to join them in their concern and care for the environment.

Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. leader of the third party.

### **Health Care Privatization**

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize November 15, 2000, as the day of action initiated by the Council of Canadians over the threat of privatization and commercialization of our health care system in Canada. Their aim is to focus on the gradual privatization of our Canadian health care system, which is happening across the country. Large numbers of Canadians will kick off this day of action with rallies in Victoria, Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, and four other cities across the country. Last night the Edmonton chapter of the Council of Canadians held a public forum on Canada's health care system, which was attended by well over 250 concerned Albertans.

I congratulate the council and its chapters for their dedicated work in keeping Albertans and Canadians involved in and informed about this most crucial issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, we have provision on Wednesdays for up to seven recognitions. We've had four, and I'm now going to call on the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

### **Spruce Grove Saints Soccer Team**

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Little has been written about a soccer team from Spruce Grove, the indoor soccer U-13 boys, the Saints, and they dominated last year's indoor soccer season. They were coached by Rob Dean, Dave Howard, and managed by Boris Iwashkiw. This team remained undefeated with an outstanding record of 14 wins and one tie.

They won the Edmonton Minor Soccer Association gold medal for the '99-2000 indoor season, and at the end of the outdoor season in 1999 the same team won the gold medal in the top division of EMSA, and they won the gold at the Belvedere tournament and the gold at the Vermilion tournament.

On that team are Trevor Dean, Dave Fenske, Jeff Kaiser, Jeremy Iwashkiw, Kyle Pagnucco, Aaron Peddie, Steve Toporowsky, Craig Lerner, Tyler Van Brabant, Steven Nachtigal, Daniel Howard, Myles Van Kuelen, Jason Oulton, Alex Hawkins, Trevor Plumb, and Matthew Astle. They are a wonderful team that Spruce Grove is

very, very proud of, and they won the gold, the provincial championship, this past season.

Thank you very much.

head: Statement by the Speaker

#### November Events

THE SPEAKER: Hon. members, Recognitions is an important aspect of our Routine. Periodically, however, my office does receive contact from individual groups in the province who say: gee, a number of recognitions were given to a number of groups, but ours was unfortunately forgotten. So I just want to advise all members that November is CPR Month, Crohn's and Colitis Awareness Month, Diabetes Awareness Month, Family Violence Prevention Month, National Community Safety and Crime Prevention Month, Osteoporosis Month, Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Month, Christmas Chocolate Campaign Month, Bone China Tea month on behalf of the Osteoporosis Society of Canada, the Luge for Liver activity in Calgary, United Way Fund Raising Campaign, Christmas Seal Campaign, March of Dimes Campaign, Girl Guides Mint Cookie Weeks, Adoption Week from November 12 to 19, National Addictions Awareness Week from November 12 to 18, the National Marfan Awareness Week from November 12 to 18, the International Day for Tolerance on November 16, and the Christmas Kettles Appeal begins on November 17 and goes through to December 24.

head: Orders of the Day

head: Written Questions

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given yesterday, it is certainly my pleasure to move that written questions appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places with the exception of Written Question 22.

[Motion carried]

#### Community Mental Health Grants

Q22. Ms Blakeman moved that the following question be accepted.

What were the application process and the criteria used for determining successful applicants for the community mental health grants for the 1997-1998 fiscal year?

MR. MAR: Mr. Speaker, I accept Written Question 22.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre to close the debate.

MS BLAKEMAN: Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to hear that from the Minister of Health and Wellness. This has been an issue of some concern to a constituent of mine, who even had the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark write to the previous minister on his behalf looking for clarification and then came to me. He is looking for the community mental health grants that were distributed in the '97-98 fiscal year over and above the usual operating grants given out to community and nonprofit groups.

I'm delighted to hear that in fact the minister will be providing me with that information. I will then be able to pass it on to my constituent. One more step in Alberta towards open and accountable government and sharing of information.

[Written Question 22 carried]

head: Motions for Returns

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Proper notice having been given yesterday, it is my pleasure once again to move that motions for returns appearing on today's Order Paper stand and retain their places.

[Motion carried]

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

head: Second Reading

#### Bill 209 Employment Standards (Parental Leave) Amendment Act, 2000

[Debate adjourned May 23: Ms Blakeman speaking]

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

MS BLAKEMAN: Thanks very much. I've waited a long time to be able to debate this bill. I think I was able to do my first two minutes about six months ago, so I'd like to complete the last 18 of them at this point.

3:00

Bill 209 is proposed by the Member for Calgary-Fort. On the face of it, I really like what's being proposed here in that our current situation of leave is narrowly focused, restricted to maternal leave, and the longest possible leave, unpaid of course, that is sanctioned under the employment standards act here in Alberta is 18 weeks. The member is proposing that any references to maternal leave be widened and the terminology changed to that of paternal leave and that a possible total of 27 weeks could be taken by either parent but not simultaneously, one parent at a time.

I appreciate that this is a private member's bill. It's not a government bill, so perhaps this is an idea that's being sort of tried out or run up the flag pole to see if anybody salutes. I hope that if that is the case, the government will follow through on that. If not, my compliments to the member for forging ahead with what he believes is a good idea.

Now, there are wider implications in this bill. Every action has a consequence to it, and I don't think that we can look at this bill in isolation of all of the other programs, benefits, remedies, and in some cases drawbacks to what's available to people. What struck me when I looked at this bill is that it's a very middle-class bill. I would venture to say that it will be mostly the middle class that could possibly take advantage of it. I don't know if that's what the member intended, but I wish there were ways of having those that would benefit from this program captured in this net, that the net could be cast wider.

Essentially what the bill is dealing with is job security. The 18 weeks that's current or the 27 weeks that's being proposed under this bill is about whether your job will be held open for you, when you can return to your job. There's no payment that's coming along with this. I've already had some people contact me about this. I've received some e-mails on it, and a lot of people don't understand that that's what is being proposed here. The only payment that is possible at this point with either maternal or paternal benefits comes through the EI program, so the 27 weeks that are being proposed here – some people have also talked about the federal government expanding their similar program to 52 weeks – that's about job

security. That means you can take that time unpaid, and when you come back at the end of that period of time, the same job should be there or a job that's very similar to it.

Therefore, it's mostly the middle class that would be able to benefit from this program because they're the only ones that are going to be likely to have earned enough money to have enough savings in the bank to tide them over this period. When you look at who is qualifying for EI benefits in this day and age, I'm afraid I'm not smiling happily at the current federal government, because the changes in the EI program . . . [interjection] Well, I'm so glad that the member agrees with me that we should have better parental leave programs, and I'm looking forward to his input on this debate.

The point is that it is members of that middle class that would be most likely to be able to access the current EI program in that the program is now based on the number of hours that have been worked over a specific period of time. What we have is an increasing participation in the workforce by women but also by men, which is part-time people working several part-time jobs. Well, their EI benefits and eligibility are much lower as a result of that and more and more people working on contract which has no EI benefits attached to it whatsoever. I mean, if you're a real high flyer that's able to command a very large contract fee, good on you. But I hope the individual would have incorporated into that fee things like holiday pay and in this instance some money tucked away for parental leave, because they're not going to be able to access any funding through the current EI program.

This program as proposed by the Member for Calgary-Fort, while obviously intended to be open to everyone—I don't know how many will actually be able to enjoy it, if the bill indeed passes, simply because they can't afford to. I look at this again, and I say that you can't look at this issue in isolation. I know that the government has a tendency to sort of behave or develop policies as though children were somehow hatched, that they don't come from families. Well, you have poor children, and they come from poor families. You have to look at these things in context. If this government was really interested in supporting families with children, I have a couple of suggestions to make, and maybe there's a way that the member can tie this into his bill or work along with it as ancillary programs, but I don't know that the bill is going to be as useful as it could have been without the context that I'm about to describe.

For example, there's been a long period of lobbying for midwifery services. Women don't really have any choice in how they have their baby in this day and age. Parental leave aside, whether it's paid or unpaid or how long it is, right now they don't even have a choice about how they are going to birth their child. So there's an issue that the government can be working on. I've been lobbying the government for over 10 years now. This is not a difficult thing to do, and it certainly does give families more choice and makes a number of people much, much more secure in that choice.

Child care. A number of years ago the government cut direct subsidies to the child care centres themselves. The subsidies are only directly available to the parents, which, as we know—it's been brought up in this Assembly before—has really reduced the flexibility of these child care centres. They're supposed to be available to cater to 40 children in one day. Well, they've got to keep the staff on, and the staff have to be trained, et cetera, et cetera. But they might only get 10 kids showing up. They don't have any kind of subsidy that is covering all of those children that they are going to have to cater to in a whole year, so it's on their dime, and frankly they're nonprofit societies, most of them, and can't afford that dime. We have a reduced number of spaces for child care that are available in Alberta because the nonprofit societies simply can't

afford to keep their doors open or keep them open at the level they were before.

Midwifery, child care: two issues that this government could work on if we're really interested in the context of parents spending time with their children and making sure that their children have a quality experience.

Let's look at schools. When parents are deciding whether or not they're going to have children, they're going to take all of this into their decision-making, and they should. I'm sure that most parents are really conscientious about that. Are there going to be schools available for their children? Will there be schools available in the vicinity, or are they going to be living in one of these areas where the ground is there, the empty space is there, but: no, gosh, sorry, you're supposed to have a school; yeah, yeah, we thought it would be built 20 years ago, but it's just not on the list. So your child will be in university by the time they actually build the school a block away from your house.

I mean, that's a consideration here if you are going to talk about children and families in Alberta. So is there even access to a school? Are you going to put the kids on a bus? Maybe the parent has to consider taking the time to drive the child to school. That's also a consideration as to whether they are going to have children. How many children are they going to have, and what quality of life are we talking about here? Is the school system going to be funded adequately, or is that child going to be sitting in a classroom with 35 other kids? It's a consideration for a parent, and I'm sure that a conscientious parent is considering choices like that.

Let's assume that we got this child all the way through school in some kind of quality education. Now we're looking at university tuition. Already today we've had representatives from colleges and institutes of technology and universities here. I mean, can these parents afford to support their child or to put money aside or to cosign the loans, frankly?

So when we're looking at a bill that starts out by talking about parental leave, all of this has to be in context. You can't make these decisions and I don't think parents do make these decisions in isolation. I don't think somebody jumps up one morning and goes: "Hee-haw, the government of Alberta has extended the parental leave to 18 weeks. That's it, boy; we're going to fire up here. Let's have a kid because of that one."

3:10

I think most people are going: "Hmm, is it the right time of my life? Am I in good health to do this? What sorts of resources are available to my family to carry this through? Can I afford the time off work? Is there a possibility of putting enough money aside in our working lives for this kind of education?" So all of these things have to be taken into context.

A more difficult side to look at for this government when we're looking at the issue of children in families is the 60 percent increase in children in custody. That's a really stunning, horrible figure for all of us legislators in this Assembly to be working with. I'm sure that those parents, when they had those kids, when they contemplated whether that leave would be useful to them or not, didn't contemplate being so poor that they'd have to put their children in care, in the care and custody of the government.

I'm not saying that I don't appreciate what the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort has brought here. I do. But I think you have to look at it along with a number of other issues. As I said, I think parents today, prospective parents, do have to look at it. I mean, if we want to be economical about it, they essentially have to do a risk assessment. Can they afford this and all of the other things that are going to add up to that? I've talked about some of the bills that they know they're going to have to face.

I have to say that I am startled when I look around at people I

know who don't have children and who I thought would have had children, who I expected to become parents. You know, without prying, but you do, you say: so you decided never to have kids. One couple flat out said to me: "Well, Laurie, you know that we're Alliance/Reform supporters and that we're very comfortable with the current government. We believe there shouldn't be any maternity benefits at all, that you should pay the whole shot yourself. That's what we believe. We like you, Laurie. You're still our friend, but we're not going to vote for you." Okay. Fine. They're still my friends. They looked at all of these costs, and they decided not to have children. I hope that's isolated. I really hope that's isolated, but I don't think it is anymore. I think more and more people are doing that risk assessment and going: uh-uh, it's not adding up here. It's particularly not adding up in Alberta.

I would like to support this bill. I do like the idea that parental leave is extending what's available now, that it does allow fathers to be more involved in the early years of their children's or their adoptive children's lives. I think that's really important. You know, I've campaigned for women's rights and equal rights for a long, long time, and part of that package is encouraging men to get more involved in their children's lives. I think this is a really concrete way to do that, and it is showing leadership. There is an expectation or a hope that indeed fathers would be taking advantage of having a parental leave program, so I really like that.

I think the additional time that's being proposed is also helpful, but I would urge the member to work in conjunction with members of his own government and perhaps look at talking, as well, with the federal government. In this day and age for a one-income family it's very, very difficult to get along. I think you have to have a number of other things in place. It's not enough to just say: "Great. You know, you can take more time off, and your job will still be there." I think there are lots of other things that are coming into play in this day and age.

When I talk about the one-earner family, this is partly what's got me a little confused about the mover of this motion. When we were discussing Motion 506, which was put forward by my colleague the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, that was a motion that was to value in a very concrete way the value of a stay-at-home parent in a one-income earner household. I've looked at the *Hansard*, and in fact the hon. member that's proposing this bill spoke against that motion. So I don't quite understand what the deal here is. Yes, giving unpaid leave or extended unpaid leave to one group of people is good, but we don't want to value the stay-at-home. I don't understand what's being said by that. Do we want them to just stay home for 18 weeks, then get back into the workforce? In speaking against and, I'm assuming, voting against Edmonton-Gold Bar's Motion 506, there was no support for those families that choose or are financially able to have one income earner and the other parent staying at home. To vote against what was being proposed in that motion and then to come forward with this bill is, I'll admit, giving me two messages, so I'm not sure exactly what this all stands for and what the support of the government is for all of this.

Those are the comments that I wanted to bring forward in this debate. I just want to quickly reference some of the e-mails and mail that I've received on this issue, and in particular they're pointing out the same inconsistency that I just pointed out. It doesn't seem clear on what kind of parents they're willing to support and for how long, again raising the concerns about the very low welfare rates causing parents to have to put their children into care with the government and what that really says about a commitment to children. This one person in particular was most annoyed with having the 52 weeks of unpaid leave put forward by the federal government and was looking to see what the provincial government was proposing.

I look forward to the continued debate and the responses to my questions from the mover of the bill, and I wish him all the best with this bill. I think it deserves some support, but it also deserves more action from the government.

Thank you very much.

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

MS KRYCZKA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to rise today and to speak in favour of private member's Bill 209. As a parent myself and now a grandparent many times over I believe it is critical that this government does everything in its power to help families and improve the well-being of children in this province. Bill 209, proposed by my colleague from Calgary-Fort, represents a small but important step toward improving the lives of many of Alberta's children.

Since we've all been away for a while, I'll begin by refreshing the memories of my fellow members as to what Bill 209 would entail. This legislation would amend the Employment Standards Code to allow for a maximum of 27 weeks of parental leave, which could be taken by one parent or divided between both parents as they see fit. The intent of the bill is to permit new parents to spend as much time as possible with their child in the all-important first few months of the newborn's life. The bill also amalgamates current provisions for maternity leave and adoption leave, giving adoptive parents the same opportunity to form a lasting bond with their new child.

Mr. Speaker, I support Bill 209 because I firmly believe that allowing a parent or both parents to spend just a little more time with their new children can have a significant impact on the future of the child. In fact, it is one of the more important factors in ensuring that children grow up to be caring, responsible, and well-adjusted adults.

3:20

Longer periods of parental leave are in line with this government's other intervention programs that encourage mothers to spend more time with their newborns. Furthermore, there is currently an extensive volume of scientific evidence that suggests that children who have more direct contact with parents in their early months and years turn out to be better adjusted and healthier adults. As a result, Mr. Speaker, parental advocacy groups across North America have been very active in promoting early childhood involvement by both parents, particularly since dual-income households have become the norm in our society. In other words, the commonly accepted belief that children whose parents take an active role in their early development are more socially adjusted is supported both by scientific evidence and by experts in the field of child development.

Even further arguments have been made regarding the need for fathers to be as active in early parenting as mothers are. Some studies have demonstrated a direct relationship between children's behaviour and the amount of time and support provided by not just mothers but fathers as well. This bill would address that factor by allowing the parents themselves to determine which of them would take the leave and when, rather than restricting them to a few short weeks of maternity leave.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are volumes of social science research that address the issue of early childhood development and the effect of a young child's environment on how that child will function in society as he or she grows up. I won't bore my colleagues by enumerating them all in detail, but I will point out that the findings of these studies are consistent and unequivocal. They indicate that the quality of a child's psychological, emotional, and intellectual development is significantly better when care is received from a

parent as opposed to a paid caregiver or other relative.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the president of the Canadian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, Dr. Elliott Barker, has argued very persuasively that nothing is more important in the world today than the nurturing that children receive in the first three years of life, for it is in these earliest years that the capacity for trust, empathy, and affection originates. However, if the emotional needs of the child are not met during these years, permanent emotional damage can occur.

Mr. Speaker, it seems obvious from the evidence that extending parental leave is a desirable option for this province. The question then becomes: will the cost of this program be passed on to small employers? The answer is: of course not. This legislation will involve no added cost to employers in the province of Alberta. The only sacrifice employers will face is that they will be required to hold an employee's position for an additional period of time. In some cases this could be up to nine weeks more than the 18 weeks currently granted by the Alberta labour code, or it could be less if both parents choose to split the 27 weeks unpaid leave that would be allowed, assuming they have different employers.

However, I must emphasize that this is not paid leave. The 27 weeks proposed in Bill 209 simply refer to the amount of time an employer must hold a position open for an employee on leave. Any payment an employee receives will be from the federal government employee insurance program, not the employer. This is a program that Albertans already pay into, a program that every other jurisdiction in this country allows their parents to take advantage of for at least 25 weeks. In other words, Mr. Speaker, by making use of this federal program, Albertans will simply be reclaiming what is their own.

I should also mention here that other jurisdictions in Canada permit much more generous leave time for parents. This legislation merely aims to bring Alberta in line with the national average. New Brunswick, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon all offer 17 weeks of maternity leave which must be scheduled prior to the expected date of delivery. These jurisdictions also provide a subsequent 12 weeks of parental or adoptive leave, a potential total of 29 weeks' leave. This is leave which may be used by either parent as long as both parents are not away from work at the same time.

The province of Ontario offers 17 weeks of maternity leave and 18 weeks of parental or adoptive leave, while Quebec has the most generous leave of all jurisdictions. They offer 18 weeks of maternity leave and up to 52 weeks of parental leave. In fact, Quebec was the first province to introduce maternity and parental leave provisions into its employment standards act. Moreover, that province was instrumental in pressuring the federal government to extend EI coverage to parental leave beyond the current 27 weeks.

As of January 1, 2001, Mr. Speaker, the federal government will provide EI coverage for maternity and parental leave for a period of 50 weeks. British Columbia and Nova Scotia have already announced that they will extend their leave provisions to one year as well.

Mr. Speaker, it should by now be evident that the leave provisions offered elsewhere in Canada provide greater support for families than the provisions offered in this province. In Alberta employees who have been with the same employer for at least a period of one year receive only 18 weeks of maternity leave. Currently adoptive parents receive just eight weeks of leave. Clearly, Alberta is being left behind, and we must act soon to give our families the support they need and deserve.

I'm sorry to say, Mr. Speaker, that this support is perhaps more forthcoming even in other countries. A recent report published by Save the Children concluded that rich countries may not be the best

at taking care of their mothers and, in turn, their children. The report ranked Canada ninth in the world when it came to the well-being of children. I looked into this and found that many of the countries that outranked Canada have longer leaves for new parents. Actually, many of these were European countries. In Europe women generally receive a well-paid leave. In Norway, for example, mothers can take 42 weeks parental leave at full wage or 52 weeks at 80 percent.

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

What Bill 209 proposes is not so drastic a measure. Rather, it strikes a wise balance between the needs of children and families and the economic realities faced by Alberta employers. Madam Speaker, private member's Bill 209 is not even recommending that we extend parental leave to one full year. In my view and that of many employers, such a move would be excessive in our economic climate. This bill is proposing that we extend leave for parents to bring it in line with the national average, and it is asking that we do take meaningful action to enhance the welfare of our children.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, this amendment to the Employment Standards Code would amalgamate current provisions for maternity leave and adoption leave; that is, it would provide adoptive parents with the same amount of parental leave as a biological parent. This is certainly a positive initiative that would reinforce the notion that the rights and responsibilities of adoptive parents are equal to those of biological parents.

For these reasons I would urge my colleagues to support Bill 209. It offers us a rare opportunity to make a significant difference in the lives of Alberta children, and we should not pass it up.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This government, when it comes to family values, likes to talk the talk, but they don't always walk the walk. Bill 209 is a step in the right direction when we look at family values and we look at those components of quality of life that lead towards family values. When we look at Bill 209 and we look at the current legislation, the Employment Standards Act and the 18 weeks of maternal leave that is allowed, the extension to 27 weeks is certainly a step in the right direction. It falls short, of course, of the federal legislation. The extension to 27 weeks is a benefit, and of course the application to parents who adopt is particularly good.

Society has changed during my lifetime dramatically, and attitudes have changed. We talk about the old school, and we talk about the way it was. It is changing, and it will continue to change. That change is, generally speaking, good because it does recognize that life is a whole lot more complicated and becomes more complicated and more stressful as time goes on. There used to be a time when you went to school and got a grade 12 education. You went out and got a job as a mechanic's helper, whatever. But there's a whole new emphasis on lifestyle. There's a whole new emphasis on recognition of family values, of doing what is best for one's child or children.

3:30

The member from what I call the triple S riding likes to hear some of my stories about my younger days, and I'm going to talk just a bit about the way it used to be – what? – 35 years ago. I recall when my son was born. My son – she's not even listening.

MRS. SOETAERT: I am.

MR. WICKMAN: I'm telling a story that will interest you.

Now, it involves my son when he was born about 35 years ago; you know, my son the architect. Back in those days, when Silvia was pregnant and in the morning had her labour pains, I was a milkman working for the Northern Alberta Dairy Pool. She had her labour pains. We got up. I drove her to the hospital, dropped her off. I didn't even walk her in. I dropped her off, and I went on to work. I finished my milk route that day. Afterwards I went to the Grand Hotel, bought a round of beer, and passed out cigars. That's the way it was back then. You know, it may sound shocking to newer parents here, but that was par for the course. If I wanted to go into the delivery room, of course, they wouldn't have allowed it.

Now, I compare that to 10 years ago. Some of you may remember me sitting here so anxious. I had this communication network set up when my daughter-in-law was in the University hospital and we were in anticipation of my first grandchild, who turned out to be a very sweet granddaughter, Ceira. Now, when I got the message to get outside there and make a quick call, I called my son. He said: Dad, you get down here in 20 minutes; otherwise it will be too late. We got down there. Of course, he was in the delivery room.

MRS. SOETAERT: You weren't though.

MR. WICKMAN: No, I wasn't. I got there a bit too late.

The other grandparents were there. My wife was there. There were brothers-in-law there. It was like family there. It was a really, really happy occasion, and that is the reality of today. I imagine we're going to see further changes.

Now, my next story involves 1971. This will brighten the heart of the Member for Edmonton-Highlands. I worked for the students' union at the University of Alberta, hired by David Leadbeater. We were not part of the academic staff or the nonacademic staff. We were a group of about 40 employees. One of the first things we did was formed a union. We unionized the student union staff, and we were allowed to do it. We became a local of CUPE, and we joined the Edmonton and District Labour Council. Now, in our very first contract that we negotiated with the students' union management and executive – and this is almost 30 years ago – we got paternal leave. That's almost unheard of, and we rejoiced, thinking that other unions would follow and this would become par for the course. It didn't happen, because we had the advantage of dealing with a very, very enlightened employer and being students, who tend to be a bit more idealistic and at times a bit more, maybe, realistic to the changing times. So there are examples that we can look back to where there is some recognition that there have to be changes.

Now, we look at what is happening federally. We have changes in the employment standards there that allow for I believe it's an additional six months of leave shared by both spouses or both parents, 27 weeks apiece. Of course, that's without pay. We look at the current EI Act that allows up to six months with pay, and as far as I can recall – and I stand to be corrected here – that only applies to the mother. I don't believe that the father has that option of staying at home and the mother continuing to work, whatever the case may be, or going back to work or them sharing it. I don't believe it applies to parents who adopt, but again I could be wrong.

Many, many years ago I remember seeing a movie with Michael Keaton; was it? It was called *Mr. Mom*. Some of you may have seen that movie. It was considered a comedy, but it was a concept that has become more and more par for the course in today's society. That is where the father stayed at home and the mother went to work. Of course, in the movie the father is mocked, because they refer to him as Mr. Mom. He goes shopping with the other moms, and he goes to the park with the other moms. He's the only one.

He's the only father who stays at home. Now it has changed. There is recognition that the father wants the same role in raising a child – not in the birth of a baby, of course, but in raising a child – being there in the early days as the mother in many, many instances. In many instances now the father will be the one that will stay home and raise that child as the mother goes to further her career.

In fact, my wife has a cousin in Germany that has gone to the extreme that he has not only stayed at home as the caregiver for that child, but he has taken her name. Now, I know that is very, very unusual, and I know that many of the female members of the House here will probably applaud that particular move. Ten years from now we may see many, many husbands doing the same thing when they get married: taking the spouse's name. Apparently in Germany they're not allowed to put the two names together, so you have to pick one or the other.

What it does is demonstrate that attitudes have changed. Attitudes have changed in most countries around the world. Attitudes have changed such that we recognize there is a much greater role for fathers in raising their children than we saw in the past. We have to take the appropriate courses of action to ensure that there is recognition. Of course, Bill 209 is a step in the right direction. We see some positive direction in that recognition of the family values that this government likes to talk about so much.

When I think back to my early days – and we all have pleasant memories of our children and grandchildren. The Member for Livingstone-Macleod, if I remember right, became a grandfather for the first time. What a thrill, eh? Wouldn't you like to be there right now with that grandchild? Exactly. That's one of the reasons that some of us sort of see that there's life after politics, because we have the opportunity to spend time with those grandchildren.

So the role of a parent, the role of a father, the role of a mother becomes very, very important, and the role of a grandparent becomes equally important. I'm not sure if this government has ever fully addressed an issue that is indirectly related, and that's the rights of the grandparent. Have we ever dealt with that one, the rights of the grandparent? In other words, if something were to happen that my son and daughter-in-law were to separate for whatever reason – let's say it was bitter – could I be denied further access to my grandchildren, who love me dearly? I thought we did deal with a bill.

MRS. SOETAERT: No. You can go to court.

MR. WICKMAN: We can go to court. Okay. Well, that's very, very positive too.

When we talk in terms of family values, when we talk in terms of a family model, we talk in terms of course of the mother, the father, the grandmothers, the grandfathers, and it's all one big unit. We have to respect that it's one large component that consists of a number of subcomponents. It's very, very important that all members of that particular family have the opportunity to participate in those experiences that are so joyful.

I imagine I could sit down with my departing member the Provincial Treasurer. I imagine I could sit down with the Provincial Treasurer, and we may have some differences on this in terms of family values. Nevertheless, I am glad that there is some recognition on that side of the House of the importance of this particular bill. It has come from a member of the government side, and that to me is an indication that we may see a vast majority of this House support Bill 209 at this particular stage so it can advance and can be given royal assent and we actually see it proclaimed.

3:40

So I do congratulate the member for bringing the bill forward. If



it was my particular bill, I probably would have gone a bit further even, but I recognize that you sometimes have to take baby steps. Sometimes you can't achieve everything overnight, so being a realist, I think the member realizes that possibly even he would like to have seen an expanded bill. But sometimes you try and sell too much, and you end up with nothing. Sometimes it's better to take a little bit here, and in a year from now you take a little bit more. Then eventually you achieve your own goals.

Now, there may be one or two others that might want to speak on this bill. I know we're down to just a few minutes, so just in case there's any last-minute thought – and I know the Member for Calgary-Buffalo can never resist the opportunity to stand up there and speak – I will give up the floor.

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

MRS. JABLONSKI: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very glad to have this opportunity to participate in the debate surrounding Bill 209, the employment standards amendment act. Many people may not be aware that Alberta currently allows the lowest amount of sanctioned maternity and parental leave time of any jurisdiction in the whole country. For this reason I believe it is long past time to revisit our current maternity leave provisions. In fact, our current maternity leave provisions were established in the old Employment Standards Code of 1976, almost 25 years ago. Though many of us have benefited from these provisions and they have served a very useful purpose, much time has passed and many things have changed, including our knowledge about the best child care and nurturing.

In light of the knowledge that good parental care is so critical in the first months and years of a child's life, I strongly support the principle of Bill 209. Just to clarify, Madam Speaker, that principle is that the true beneficiaries of this legislation and of parental leave will be the children of Alberta. How will they derive that benefit? By being around the most important people in their lives, their mom or dad, for as much time as possible in the very critical early stages of life. It is true that parents will also derive some benefit from having access to 27 weeks of leave. However, parents who take maternity or paternal leave are performing a valuable contribution to Alberta and helping to raise happy, well-adjusted Albertans for the future.

Turning from the future to the past for a moment, I know that many of us here in the Assembly had the benefit of being raised, at least in the early years, by one parent who stayed at home. I also know that many of us in this Assembly may believe that is the best way to raise a child. Now, we may not be authorities in the field of child care, but many of us are parents and grandparents with a lot of subjective evidence on which to base the conclusion that a child raised with the love and care of its parents has a great start in life. In this case, Madam Speaker, it is a conclusion that the child care experts agree with. Those who preceded me in this debate have cited studies and statistics that demonstrate there is considerable truth to this hypothesis.

One might be tempted to ask, though, why we need legislation to create something called parental leave rather than just extending maternity leave. Well, parental advocacy groups across North America have been very active in promoting early childhood involvement by both parents, particularly since dual-income households are increasingly the norm. In fact, Madam Speaker, seven out of 10 families in this country are dual-income families.

Arguments have been made regarding the need for fathers to be as active in early parenting as mothers. Among others, Dr. Paul Amatos of the University of Nebraska has demonstrated a direct

relationship between children's behaviour and the amount of time and support provided by not just mothers but fathers as well. Now, it seems only sensible that as a government we should leave it up to these families to sort out their own hectic schedules and determine on their own which parent will take leave and for how long. Bill 209 allows parents this freedom of choice, another reason I support it. However, Madam Speaker, despite supporting Bill 209 and its basic intent, I must also note one potential problem with the legislation.

THE ACTING SPEAKER: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Red Deer-North, but unfortunately under Standing Order 8(5)(a), which provides for up to five minutes for the sponsor of a private member's public bill to close debate, I would now invite the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort to close debate on Bill 209.

MR. CAO: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Let me begin by saying that I'm very grateful to all of my colleagues who have contributed to the debate on my private member's bill and the many Albertans who called and sent e-mail to indicate their support. I was pleased to see a number of members of this House rise in support of the Employment Standards (Parental Leave) Amendment Act. I have also taken note of the concerns raised by some of my other colleagues. Despite these minor concerns, I still believe that Bill 209 is a positive initiative that could make a profound difference in the early development of young Albertans.

In fact, Madam Speaker, that was my perspective in designing this bill. I approached the situation not from the point of view of the mother or the father or the employer. I considered the issue from the perspective of a newborn, of a recently adopted child. From the perspective of that child the very best thing possible is without a doubt to spend as much time as possible with a loving and nurturing parent.

Bill 209 does several things in order to achieve this highly desirable goal. First, it raises the permitted amount of unpaid leave from 18 weeks to 27 weeks, bringing it in line with the national average. Secondly, Bill 209 amalgamates maternity leave and parental leave, thus allowing parents the freedom to determine which one of them will stay home with the child and for how long. Thirdly, Bill 209 extends this new parental leave provision to adoptive parents as well, giving them the same rights as other new mothers and fathers.

Madam Speaker, I think the potential benefits of Bill 209 are clear. As we have heard in this House, study after study shows that the early relationship between parent and child is one of the most critical factors in determining the future health and happiness and success of a child.

Now, Madam Speaker, there are just a couple of additional points I would like to emphasize as we conclude the debate on Bill 209. I know that some of my colleagues have expressed concern about the effect that this legislation will have on businesses in Alberta. However, given the recent extension of the federal employment insurance benefit to cover parental leave for the entire year, Bill 209 is unlikely to cause Alberta businesses to incur any significant additional cost. It may cause some temporary reduction in staff availability, but with 1.5 million Albertans in the workforce and only 37,000 births per year the impact is likely to be quite minimal. It is even possible that productivity could improve as employees return to work energized and refocused after 27 weeks rather than tired and distracted after just 18 weeks.

So, Madam Speaker, since my bill's impact on Alberta's tremendous prosperity is likely to be minimal and the potential impact on the future of our children is so great, I would urge all my colleagues to support the bill. If there remains any minor or technical problems

with the legislation, they can surely be worked out at the future stages of this legislative process, but the principle behind the bill is unquestionably sound.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, this bill represents a momentous opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of Alberta children and families. We cannot afford to pass up this chance. Please think and feel for the Alberta infants when you vote on this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:49 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Mrs. Gordon in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Gibbons	Marz
Blakeman	Haley	Mason
Bonner	Hancock	McClellan
Broda	Hlady	Pannu
Cao	Jablonski	Smith
Cardinal	Jacques	Soetaert
Coutts	Johnson	Strang
Dickson	Jonson	Tarchuk
Doerksen	Kryczka	Thurber
Evans	Laing	Trynchy
Forsyth	Leibovici	Wickman
Fritz		

4:00

Against the motion:

Friedel	McFarland	Renner
Magnus		
Totals:	For – 34	Against – 4

[Motion carried; Bill 209 read a second time]

### **Bill 210 Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2000**

THE ACTING SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MRS. FORSYTH: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and present my private member's bill, Bill 210, Traffic Safety Amendment Act, to the Assembly today.

Madam Speaker, I'd like to dedicate Bill 210 to Ben and Darlene Keuben, Susan and Gordon Smith, Jean and Doug Powell in loving memory of their children Amber and Brandy Keuben, Amber's boyfriend Craig Powell, and Brandy's friend Stephanie Smith.

It's over four years since the tragic day that these young people lost their lives. In an instant on June 23, 1996, near Morley, Alberta, the lives of three families were shattered. Four young people returning home to Calgary, returning to their families following a weekend camping trip, were killed instantly in a head-on collision. The lives of these four young people were ended by a convicted impaired driver. He was drunk, and these young people paid the ultimate price.

If I may, Madam Speaker, I would like again to read to the

members of the Assembly an excerpt from the letter written to me shortly after by the parents of two of these girls.

Two of these young people were our daughters – Amber who was 20 and Brandy who was 15. The other two were very close friends of our girls. Not only did we lose our family that day, but our life as we've known it has changed forever. As parents you work and dream for a future for your children. Our dreams also died. We are left mad. We are left angry. We are left frustrated. Most of the time we are numb, and most of the time we are sick. How do you walk away and rebuild your life? We are now at a point where we need to see some changes made. How many more innocent people have to die before we realize that the impaired drinking laws are not working?

Madam Speaker, the alleged drunk driver in this case was charged with four counts of criminal negligence, one count of criminal negligence causing injury, and four counts of impaired driving causing death. This man did not even possess a valid driver's licence.

By the time the preliminary hearings were concluded and a court date was set for the accused, a year and a half had passed since that tragic day. This extended period of time was extremely difficult on the family. How do these three families pick up the pieces of their shattered lives following such a tragic event? Furthermore, outrage and disgust followed the sentencing, which was a five-year jail term for killing four young people. The driver will be eligible for parole in 20 months. To this family and many other Albertans, murder is murder, whether it's by a gun or by a car.

Madam Speaker, Alberta has the fifth highest rate of people charged with impaired driving of all the jurisdictions in Canada and almost two times as many as Ontario and British Columbia. In 1998 one out of five drivers involved in fatal collisions had consumed alcohol. As the involvement of alcohol increased, so did the severity of the accidents. In 1998 there were 17,345 casualty collisions in Alberta. In 1,586 of them, or 9.1 percent, the drivers had either been drinking or judged to have been impaired. In the same year 22.6 percent of fatal collisions involved drivers that had been drinking or impaired. Across Canada among fatally injured drivers who had alcohol in their blood system, 62 percent of the fatalities had a BAC over 150 milligrams, 22 percent of fatalities had a BAC of 81 to 150 milligrams, 16 percent of fatalities had a BAC of 1 to 80 milligrams.

Madam Speaker, although Criminal Code impaired driving convictions can give rise to significant consequences, an accused person routinely faces the possibility of additional sanctions. Most of the provinces and territories have instituted administrative penalties or controls to mandate action against the suspected and convicted impaired drivers, some of which may be effective immediately and independently of any Criminal Code conviction.

It is clear that more can be done to address this problem and stop unnecessarily placing the lives of Albertans at risk. If this were Utopia, the federal government would have invoked a zero tolerance in the Criminal Code long ago. In Canada every eight hours someone is killed by an impaired driver.

Statistics like this have prompted me to take action. This Assembly cannot change the Criminal Code. It is out of our jurisdiction. What we can do is write our own traffic laws in the interest of public safety. This is what my bill does. It prevents drivers who blow over .05 BAC to the legal limit from driving for 24 hours. It is very simple. It is a reasonable request, and it is the right thing to do.

Clearly we must continue to educate and raise awareness to put an end to these tragedies, to save the lives of these people. In fact, this legislation is driven by the tragic death of my constituents in my constituency and across the province due to impaired motorists. We should be moving to make it harder for drunk drivers to offend and

to get drivers whose judgment is impaired by alcohol off the road. This is what my bill intends to do.

Most provinces have legislated brief periods of licence suspension for persons whose BAC is over 50 milligrams of alcohol but less than the criminal legal limit of 80 milligrams. The purpose of such action is to allow the police to suspend drivers at the roadside for up to 24 hours in the hope of preventing an impaired driving offence, to give them one more mechanism for prevention.

Madam Speaker, many studies and interest groups have expressed the view that despite the fact that a BAC of .08 percent is the legal point of criminal impairment, a driver is actually impaired at much lower levels. For example, the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, AADAC, notes that even with a BAC below .08 percent, thoughts, judgment, and ability to estimate distance can be impaired and reaction time decreased. AADAC states that at a .06 percent BAC, judgment is somewhat impaired, there is some loss of physical co-ordination, and a person is less able to make rational decisions about their capabilities.

Madam Speaker, these are drivers that police have at their own discretion the ability to suspend for 24 hours. These are drivers that are often let go at a check stop. This should not be the case if these drivers are a threat to the public. Moving to .05 may be more of a deterrent to people who do not want to break the law. I hope this bill will start the process to move to a .05 legal limit, help educate people that their judgment slows down when you drink, and put pressure on the federal government to get their act together.

Madam Speaker, all Canadian jurisdictions except Alberta have legislation to address a .05 BAC. In British Columbia if a driver is caught driving with a BAC of .05 to .08 percent, the driver is subject to a 24-hour suspension, which is recorded on his or her driver's licence. Saskatchewan uses a points system to assess drivers and their infractions. If drivers are caught a second time with a blood alcohol level within the warning range, a BAC of .05 to .08, they receive an automatic 24-hour roadside licence suspension, and more points are applied to their licence. If an experienced driver is caught a third time with a blood alcohol level within the range, they receive an automatic 24-hour roadside licence suspension and must attend addiction screening. Newer, probation drivers face a much stiffer penalty and extension of the driver probationary period of one to two years.

In Manitoba a driver caught with a BAC between .05 and .08 receives an automatic 24-hour licence suspension and pays a \$40 surcharge when they renew their licence. Already touted as having the toughest drinking and driving laws in the country, Manitoba has recently made them even tougher by automatically impounding the vehicles of impaired drivers for 30 days and 90 days for repeat offenders. They expect that this could cut impaired driving fatalities by half.

4:10

Ontario legislation states that if a driver is caught with a blood alcohol level between .05 and .08, a peace officer can require the suspension of his or her driver's licence for a period of 12 hours. Drivers in Ontario's graduated licensing system – that's new drivers – must maintain a BAC of zero or be subject to a 30-day licence suspension and fine.

Newfoundland drivers caught with a BAC between .05 and .08 are subject to an automatic 24-hour roadside suspension plus a \$100 licence reinstatement fee to be paid within 30 days. If the fine is not paid, the driver's suspension continues until the payment is made. If a driver is caught three times within two years, that driver is then subject to a two-month suspension and must take a Think First alcohol education program.

If caught driving in Prince Edward Island with a BAC between .05 and .08, the driver is subject to a 24-hour licence suspension. Drivers under the age of 19 who are caught with a BAC within the range are subject to an administrative driving prohibition, which causes a suspension of 90 days in addition to the regular 24-hour suspension.

The Northwest Territories currently does not deal with the BAC of between .05 and .08. However, public consultations are currently under way to possibly introduce legislation which would impose administrative penalties upon drivers caught driving with a BAC of over .04 percent. These consultations are expected to be completed, but as of this date no legislation has been passed, and the legislation proposals have just been recently submitted.

Madam Speaker, Bill 210 is not going to take drivers with a BAC of .05 to .08 and lock them away and throw away the key. It simply takes a driver who is a danger to public safety and removes his or her driving privileges for 24 hours. What Bill 210 is saying is that drinking and driving hurts everyone involved, so just don't do it. Having a 24-hour suspension is certainly going to make anyone think about it before they drive having had a couple, because in fact many impaired driving accidents happen after only a couple. This legislation will work in keeping drinking drivers off the road, making our roads safer for all Albertans. Having a licence suspension for 24 hours for drivers in that range is a small initiative that will pay huge dividends by saving the lives of Albertans.

Bill 210 is supported by the Calgary and the Edmonton police; the RCMP; AADAC; the Alberta Motor Association; PAID, which is People Against Impaired Driving; MADD, which is Mothers Against Drinking Drivers; the McCauley seniors action group; SADD, which is Students against Drunk Drivers; and many, many other Albertans. A majority of Canadians want their elected officials to introduce tougher laws and stiffer penalties to halt incidents of impaired driving. A random poll of 1,200 Canadians revealed that 9 out of every 10 Canadians believe that impaired driving is a problem that governments should fight. Three of every four Canadians surveyed believe that federal and provincial governments are not doing enough to reduce the blood alcohol concentration levels from 80 to 50.

Madam Speaker, Bill 210 could have saved the lives of Amber and Brandy, Craig and Stephanie, and countless other Albertans.

Thank you.

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

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 210, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act, 2000. I can appreciate where the member is coming from. I've listened intently, and I guess from this I'm trying to figure out: would making this law have saved those lives?

I had a cousin. She was in her mid-30s with four children, owned a Wendy's in Grande Prairie. Locked it up late one night, and on her way home she was killed by an impaired driver. Would this type of legislation have saved her life? I don't know, and I don't know if making the net bigger and catching more people at a certain blood alcohol level is how we achieve that. Is it addressing those people who drive impaired? Is that not the issue we should get at? That's what I want to see in legislation. I want to be tough on those people who drive impaired.

I haven't decided how I'm going to vote on this bill. I am going to listen to everything. What I really want to weigh out is: is that the prevention that we're looking for?

Our youth group has had a speaker from Mothers Against

Drinking Drivers, a powerful, passionate speech. Every time my kids drive to a party or go somewhere, especially Friday and Saturday nights, I always say, "Drive carefully." I always say a prayer that they come home safely. So that's what we need to be looking for. I would venture to say that some of our young people are far better than we are. In fact, just the other night my daughter was going to a party, and she phoned me – she's 18 – and said: "Mom, I'm going to have a couple of drinks. Would you mind picking me up at midnight?" So like a good mother of course I said: sure, that's no problem. Now, fortunately she was at a party next door to my mom's, and Grandma said: well, you just crawl into bed here. So that's what she did. And do you know what? A lot of kids do that. They'll stay overnight at somebody's place. They'll have a designated driver. To me that's where we should focus our energy, on education and prevention.

I know many of us have seen kids from our communities be fortunate enough to be part of the PARTY program, where they take kids to the hospital and there they set up a program so that kids know what it's like to try to eat with limited capabilities, to try to do things when they're unable to see or unable to walk. It's a powerful program for young teens. Every young person I've talked to who's gone through that PARTY program has benefited from it and has realized that that's not where they want to be. They are very conscientious about safe driving and drinking and driving.

I want safer roads. I think all of us know of someone or know of a family or have someone in our family who's lost their life because of an impaired driver. I don't think there's anyone here who wouldn't say: "You know what? That's criminal, and it can't be allowed."

4:20

Now, going to .05 instead of .08, I don't know if that's the answer. I really don't. I will tell you that one of the answers – and I don't think there's anybody who is informed about the DARE program who would disagree with this – is prevention programs like the DARE program. That's the drug and alcohol resistance education program that is offered to grade 6. In some places they're trying to get it offered to grade 8, and that would be key, because you've started a good train of thinking, kids on their way to being able to handle peer pressure, which I think is more intense in junior high than at any other level. Then to catch them in the middle of junior high, to have access to that program again in grade 8, I think would be an excellent, excellent thing for us to do.

You know what? That does take a commitment of money because you're going to have to hire a larger police force because it is a program delivered by policemen and policewomen. It's important that it's delivered by them because then those kids see those police in the community, not just the guy giving Mom or Dad a ticket when they go too fast or the bad guy on TV. They see them as real people who care about them. Though the dollars put into that would seem significant, the dollars we would save by doing that would be far more significant, far more. If we can prevent one child from being involved in drugs and alcohol, then we've achieved with every bit of money what employing a larger police force would do. So I would say that that's where the focus should be, on prevention. I don't know if it's making that net bigger, but focusing on the people who continually drive impaired.

I don't see how this legislation would have saved my cousin; I really don't. Maybe if one young person somewhere had been aware of a designated driver program or the Red Nose campaign that happens at Christmastime – those kinds of things we should be encouraging and supporting because that's where we get to the root of the problem, and that's where I'd like to see our focus.

So I'm reserving how I'm voting on this. I'm not sure. I'm one of the strongest voices about people having a drink and driving. I'm opposed to that, and I'm sure everyone in here is. But the reality is how we educate people. Is that not the key? If education isn't the key, then I think we've missed the boat, because education is prevention, and that saves lives. When people don't drink and drive, that saves lives. If we don't deal with that – I mean, one thing is punishment, but the other thing is prevention. Even if the person who killed my cousin is in jail, she can't come back. So that's the key that I would like to see addressed: the prevention issues with drinking and driving.

So with those comments, Madam Speaker, I'm not sure how I'm voting. I'm strongly opposed to impaired driving, as everyone is. I don't think there's any debate in this Legislature about that, but the debate is: how do we best approach that? I'm not sure that this is the right tool to use, but I am going to listen to some of the debate, and I'll make up my mind as the debate progresses.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand in this Assembly and participate in this debate. First of all, I'd like to congratulate the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing this legislation forward. I know that she's been working hard and carrying out consultations on this legislation for some time now, and the final product is certain to stimulate debate in this Assembly. The member especially deserves congratulations for proposing legislation that will help make Alberta a safer place, where tragedies resulting from drunk driving will no longer touch Alberta families and their loved ones.

Madam Speaker, impaired drivers kill an average of 4.5 people and injure 125 people in Canada every 24 hours. The tragic loss of loved ones by drunk driving is horrifying and unacceptable. I believe that any legislation that could stop, slow, or limit the number of impaired drivers on Alberta's roads should be seriously considered by this Legislature.

Madam Speaker, as many in this Assembly may know, I take a zero tolerance approach to impaired driving, and that's why I believe this legislation needs to be examined. The fact is that many Albertans still drink and drive. Nationally in 1996 there were 78,894 persons charged with impaired driving offences. In other words, for every 100,000 persons aged 16 years and over, 335 were charged with impaired driving. Although this rate represents a 6 percent decrease from 1995, we cannot afford to claim victory against the problem and become complacent when deaths and injuries are still attributed to impaired drivers in this province.

Alberta's rate of persons charged with impaired driving offences has been gradually decreasing since 1981, falling from 1,431 in 1981 to 486 in 1996, nearly a threefold decline. Historically, however, Alberta's rate, while steadily declining, has been consistently higher than the national rate. This trend needs to be addressed. Any death due to impaired driving is an unacceptable death.

Madam Speaker, I wish to add to this debate by outlining some of the initiatives undertaken by government organizations and commissions, particularly the efforts undertaken by the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission. I feel that it is important to outline their position on impaired driving and the sort of work that is being done in relation to prevention. AADAC strives to make a difference in people's lives by leading them to an addiction-free future. The Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission recognizes that impaired driving remains a complex issue of concern despite the

progress that has been made in recent years. Currently AADAC is focusing on the addiction factors related to impaired driving and is committed to working in partnership with Alberta government departments, agencies, and other stakeholders to address this very important issue. AADAC believes that a variety of strategies, including prevention, education, as was mentioned, harm reduction, enforcement, and treatment, are required in order to further reduce impaired driving in this province.

As we can see from the declining rates of people charged with impaired driving, there is some good news in the battle against impaired driving. In the last few years society has grown more aware and less tolerant of impaired driving than it once was. Impaired driving is now viewed almost universally as a serious offence and a behaviour that is socially unacceptable.

There's been marked reduction in the magnitude of the impaired driving problem over the past decade. In Alberta licence suspension as a result of an impaired driving conviction has declined 54 percent, from 17,160 in 1988-89 to 7,835 in 1997-98. Madam Speaker, although this is a positive trend, Alberta continues to have one of the highest offence rates for impaired driving, ranking fourth among provinces and territories in 1997.

Recently many Canadians and Albertans have been calling for a reduction in the Criminal Code blood alcohol level. Groups like Mothers Against Drinking Drivers, MADD, have been spearheading this effort and calling for a move from the current .08 blood alcohol content to .05 blood alcohol content. This lobby has been successful in many Canadian jurisdictions. The rationale behind this is due to evidence that people suffer impaired judgment and control at levels way before the current .08 BAC.

4:30

Madam Speaker, we know more now about the effects of alcohol consumption than we did when the original .08 BAC was enacted. The physical effects of alcohol consumption vary depending upon the levels of alcohol consumed. These symptoms, as some of us may know, can occur for different people at varying levels of consumption based on such factors as tolerance, size, age, and so on. Studies done by the Addictions Research Foundation of Ontario concluded that impairment occurs at a much lower level than previously thought.

Madam Speaker, at a BAC of .03 to .08 the physical effects of consumption are cited as including euphoria, diminution of attention, judgment, and control. It also marks the beginning of sensory motor impairment and loss of efficiency in finer motor performance. We have all seen bad drivers, but a driver suffering from these symptoms does not sound like a driver that I would want to share the road with. It is for this reason that groups ranging from prominent medical associations to Mothers Against Drinking Drivers call for the use of .05 as the point of legal impairment, as Bill 210 helps us move towards.

It is refreshing, Madam Speaker, to see that a wide spectrum of groups has become involved in addressing the impaired driving issue. Health agencies, law enforcement, the insurance industry, and community action advocacy groups have all contributed towards reducing the problem. Although a variety of strategies have been developed to combat impaired driving, the emphasis has tended to be on legislation and law enforcement. Other approaches, such as public education, hospitality employee training, and the designated driver programs, have proved to be important.

Madam Speaker, AADAC will continue to develop and deliver quality prevention and education programs that assist individuals, families, and communities to develop healthy approaches and attitudes towards the use of alcohol. AADAC's prevention mes-

sages contribute to increased responsibility with respect to the use of alcohol and other drugs and can therefore help reduce the incidence of impaired driving.

Madam Speaker, the commission also supports the development and implementation of prevention initiatives that focus specifically on those segments of the population that disproportionately contribute to the impaired driving problems, such as repeat impaired drivers. AADAC is committed to reducing harm and promoting health recovery amongst those people affected by alcohol problems. Concern goes beyond high-risk behaviours and heavy drinkers to include the majority of Albertans who drink in moderation but may find themselves in a situation where they or someone else has consumed an excess amount of alcohol.

While the commission supports such initiatives as designated driver and server intervention programs, AADAC opposes any availability of alcohol marketing practices that would be expected to increase the risk of harmful consequences such as impaired driving. AADAC does not deliver programs specifically for impaired drivers. Rather, counseling and treatment services are available to all Albertans who need them. Within AADAC individuals have access to a range of treatment options and will be actively involved in defining their treatment goals and the most appropriate methods for achieving them.

Legislation and regulation should be aimed at promoting the health and well-being of society and discouraging drinking and driving amongst all age groups. Regulatory strategies must be multidimensional and should include measures such as better enforcement of existing laws, graduated licensing, and public education.

Madam Speaker, AADAC will continue in its efforts to work with individuals, government agencies, communities, and other stakeholders to promote responsible alcohol use, reduce the adverse consequences associated with inappropriate consumption, provide effective prevention and treatment services, and conduct research. Well-conceived and executed research into the prevalence, causes, prevention, and treatment of alcohol problems and consequences such as impaired driving should be conducted on an ongoing basis. The results of such research should be communicated to advance public and professional knowledge and to improve service delivery. We hope that these preventative measures reduce the number of impaired drivers on Alberta's roadways, but as stated earlier, that is not the only answer. We must become more effective at enforcing the laws we already have.

Madam Speaker, recently the Department of Infrastructure initiated a new plan to deal with this problem. While I support Bill 210 as an initiative to get drunks off the road, I am looking forward to seeing what sort of impact recent initiatives have made on impaired driving in Alberta. In November two changes were initiated, a 10- year window instead of five for monitoring repeat drinking and driving offences and the administrative licence suspension; that is, the ALS program. The result will be harsher consequences for drivers caught drinking and driving. This new initiative will monitor repeat offenders for 10 years instead of five. A first, second, and third conviction within a 10-year period will receive a one, three, or five-year suspension and associated intervention.

The ALS program brings an immediate suspension to the accused's driver's licence, an automatic three-month driver's licence suspension, or disqualification for drivers charged with providing a breath or blood sample more than .08 or refusing to give a breath or blood sample. This new initiative also includes an automatic six-month driver's licence suspension or disqualification if the offence results in bodily harm or death.

Madam Speaker, Bill 210 then may complement these initiatives by adding a mandatory 24-hour suspension for drivers at .05 BAC and above. Many jurisdictions in this country have moved to a 24-hour suspension for .05 and above. Due to the recent evidence about where the actual level of impairment occurs, I conclude that Bill 210 should be seriously considered by this House.

Madam Speaker, this Assembly can't change the Criminal Code of Canada; it's not in our jurisdiction. But what it can do is enact a 24-hour suspension for drivers between .05 and .08 BAC in the interests of public safety.

Thank you.

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

MR. DICKSON: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I hadn't initially planned on speaking to the bill, but, you know, in the eight years that the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek and I have both been in this Assembly, she has established a very impressive record of taking private members' bills that in fact earn the support of a majority of members in this Assembly. One of the things I've learned – it may have taken me a few years – is that when the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek speaks and introduces a bill, you'd better pay attention because there's an excellent chance that the next time we see it, it's going to be a government bill or it's going to become law. So it's because of my respect for that member's proficiency and facility for being able to make law that I want to offer some observations.

[Mr. Renner in the chair]

I'd just make this comment first. I don't think there's anybody in this Assembly that is not concerned about the carnage on our highways. I don't think there's anybody who is not concerned about the impact that drinking has when impaired drivers get behind the wheel, and I don't think there's anybody in this Assembly who would not want to see a reduction in the injuries and fatalities on Alberta highways. For me, though, it's a question – and I've often talked in the Assembly before about making a distinction between things that sort of make us feel good or that sound like you're doing something about a problem and things that have a direct connection with achieving the decided outcome.

You know, I heard the member. She spoke eloquently in terms of her motivation for bringing the bill, and I accept that very genuine motivation. But my question to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek would be – and I never heard her say that – if we had a roadside screening limit of .05, would these fatalities that she talked about with such impact have been avoided? Well, the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek believes that is so.

4:40

I've spent a little time looking around at what we know. We've done a lot of work in this country in particular, not just through AADAC but through different organizations. It seems to me that we've learned a few things about what the impact of drunk driving is and what's going on on our roads.

I notice that you always see the researchers in here, the ones I run into Sunday or Monday night when I roll into the Annex who have been working hard. I don't know whether the government researchers have seen this, but there was a 1998 study done in Vancouver by the Vancouver police and the Vancouver transportation lobby group, SENSE, that came up with some information which in fact has been replicated in other studies in Alberta, and I'll talk about some Edmonton studies in a moment. One of the things they found and

that was also in an Ottawa 1995 Traffic Injury Research Foundation report is that in the majority of cases Canadian drivers involved in alcohol-related accidents leading to injury or death have blood alcohol levels well in excess of .08, well in excess. I'll mention some Edmonton stats in a moment too.

It seems to me that the person who is killing on Alberta highways is not the woman of petite stature who has a half-glass of wine and happens to register because of her metabolic rate and her size and weight and so on. After a half-glass of wine she may be over .05. Statistically, the person who is more likely to maim, kill, and do injury is a person with double, with 130, 140, twice the legal limit. Those are the people statistically, on an evidential basis – the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek may have seen some of those studies – who are doing the injury on our highways.

The average blood alcohol content among drivers in the Ottawa study was more than twice the legal limit. That same study found that there were two categories of drivers who really present the major problems on Alberta highways. The first group are the habitual hard-core drinkers who repeatedly drive after drinking with high blood alcohol concentrations – that's well over 80 milligrams – and they're very resistant to behaviour change. That group represents less than 1 percent of Canada's population, but it accounts for more than one-third of the fatal accidents in which alcohol is a factor. Now, the other group of drivers are the young, thrill-seeking males aged 20 to 25. It's interesting here that if we're trying to make a road safer, the evidence suggests we would be focusing on the very serious repeat offenders who drive with way over 80 milligrams and then focus on those young drivers.

It's interesting to note that I think Quebec is the only other province in Canada that has an age of majority, an age to be able to drink, of under 19. I think every other province in Canada is 19 or higher. I think Quebec and Alberta are the only ones with an 18 age.

So the two things that suggest to me that you'd consider if we want to make our roads safer are, number one, raising the age to be able to access alcohol to at least the level of other provinces, 19, and the second thing that I'd want to do would be to say: how do we do a better job of making sure that we get those people who are so absolutely intoxicated it's a wonder they can get the key in the ignition, never mind out of the parking lot and onto the highway? So that's a concern.

You know, there was a story I noticed in *Alberta Report* that talked about one study, and of every 100 road fatalities caused by legally impaired drivers, more than 75 percent had a blood alcohol concentration in excess of .15. Think about that: 75 percent in this group were nearly double the current legal limit of .08.

Now, at this point this brings in one of my other concerns. It's about fairness of law, and it has to do with this. Sometimes I think we get a bit bamboozled and buffaloes by science. We've got to remember that blood alcohol and blood alcohol absorption is uniquely a personal experience. If you take somebody who is 190 pounds and somebody who is 90 pounds, what you will find is that depending on metabolic rates, we all take alcohol into our bloodstream at different rates. [interjection] Yeah, of course referring to my friend from Edmonton-Meadowlark down the way.

I've practised law long enough to remember when .08 was brought in, and it was a question of looking at a rate at which most people began to show some evident impairment. But there are lots of studies that show that if you're talking about who can't drive safely, whose ability to be able to turn, to accelerate, to brake is somehow adversely affected, it varies. Point zero eight sort of caught most people, and that's why that was settled on. To go with .05 – and I know we're not talking a Criminal Code offence; it's about a roadside suspension. I'd give this with more vigour and

more passion if I thought this was an amendment to the Criminal Code. Still, the point should be made. I think the point is that what we should be recognizing is that what you do is you expand the net.

Now, we know that we don't currently have enough police officers in this province to do the job. You talk to the Calgary city police force. You talk to the Edmonton city police force. What they tell you is that they are so darn busy, they are overrun with so many demands that they're not able to focus on some of those hard-core repeat offenders that are causing all of the problems. I think that's part of the reality.

I wish I could hear from the Minister of Justice on this thing because I'd feel a lot more comfortable if I knew that there were more resources going into getting those people who are driving at twice the legal limit and prosecuting them to the full extent afforded by the Criminal Code. This would make more sense to me, but here's the problem I have, Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, through the Speaker. We now have police officers doing more roadside suspensions of people such as that woman who has had a half-glass of wine and is driving back to the office from lunch or the MLA or the cabinet minister who has just finished a meeting with the hotel association and is driving back to his or her office. I specifically did not focus on any given member. This is a hypothetical member. Bear with me: hypothetical.

Let's recognize that you take finite police resources, so we've got more police officers now administering roadside suspensions to people who are driving back to the office after that half-glass of wine. If we had an infinite number of police officers, great, but that's one fewer police officer or reduced police resources to be trying to hammer the people that are creating the problem.

4:50

One of the things I found really interesting – I'll just see if I can quickly find it. I had seen a study that talked about why wouldn't we be saying that we'd have much tougher sentences for repeat offenders. Although I can't find the quote as quickly as I'd like to, I think the point I'm trying to make is this. In this province there was a survey done in the city of Edmonton. I stand to be corrected, and I invite the former Solicitor General, who I know has an encyclopedic memory of everything he saw as Solicitor General years back, to set me straight, and I encourage the former Attorney General to advise me if I'm wrong. There was an Edmonton study, and what the Edmonton study found is that police officers are too busy, that a lot of people who should be charged with impaired driving are not being charged with impaired driving. And why is that? Because they find they don't have enough time to invest in the court process. They don't have enough time to do the work that's involved in putting together an impaired driving prosecution. So it seems to me that what we've got, Mr. Speaker, is an obvious way of trying to make our streets safer, which would be to make some changes in terms of the resources available through the police service and through the Ministry of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other things that we know makes a big difference is public education. We've seen some of the impact of that, and we all know that when we go to a party now we see – and I'm really proud of young people. I see young people that impress me with their maturity, and they typically have a designated driver. I see more young people driving far more responsibly than was the case when I grew up. I mean, all of that public education is having a significant, positive impact. There's more we can do around that.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to set my timer, so I'm hoping I may get a signal from the table in terms of how close I am to the end. This is where in the script it's supposed to say, "Move to finish with a flourish," but since my notes are a bit scattered, it's not going to be quite as clear as I would want it to be.

I was talking about an Edmonton study, and I do want to share

this with members because I think this is significant. There was a study done in Edmonton, and what they found was that the highest blood alcohol content by an Edmonton Police Service handheld Alcosure device and digital intoxilizer that year, in 1997, had been five times the legal limit of 80. The report went on to say that on average the 2,000 drivers, 90 percent of whom were male, who were charged with impaired driving blew double the limit, and one-third were repeat offenders.

Just to come back to a point I'm making, not very precisely but hopefully it's there in the course of my argument, what we should be doing is ensuring that we have enough police resources – and that's a provincial responsibility – to ensure that we invest the time to make sure that those people who are driving with a serious level of impairment literally have the Criminal Code thrown at them. I don't want to hear about Crown prosecutors having to cut deals because they're too busy, because their caseload is too big. I mean, that's where we start making a change.

You know, maybe the former Attorney General and Minister of Justice will tell us, through the Speaker, why it is that if you go into the main remand courtrooms in Edmonton and Calgary, you find Crown prosecutors that aren't using all of the tools available in the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code has got at least five different offences that can be used. You've got serious penalties. You've got provision for compounding penalties for repeat offenders. But do you know what happens? Too often we don't ask for them. Too often we have plea bargains that mean that something is passed for a sentence . . .

DR. WEST: Well, that's your profession. Your profession does that.

MR. DICKSON: My profession, which I'm proud of, ensures that the guilty people go to jail and the innocent people are not punished unduly. I'm proud of that, former Solicitor General. You know, Mr. Speaker, there was a slur on a profession which I am very proud of, and I shouldn't allow myself to be baited.

I sometimes wish at a time like this that the government took the kind of good advice they get from the Canadian Bar Association, that they get from groups that have a lot of practical experience in terms of dealing with impaired driving, because there are a host of things we can do.

I'd refer members to some studies. There's *The Role of Alcohol in Fatal Traffic Crashes in British Columbia* over a four-year period, that I cite in support of the point I'm trying to make. There is an Edmonton study done by the University of Alberta, *Factors Antecedent to Impaired Driving*, January, 1988, which is good reading.

AN HON. MEMBER: In 1988?

MR. DICKSON: Well, you know something? Impaired driving isn't a brand-new phenomenon, and some of the research that's been done in 1988 is as valid and as useful in 2000 as it was at the time it was written.

[The Speaker in the chair]

There is a further report on beverage alcohol concentration and traffic safety which was done in Ottawa in I think 1990.

Much more to be said, but by somebody else, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

MRS. GORDON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member

that preceded me said, he enjoys standing in the Legislature and speaking after the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Well, I likewise always look forward to speaking after the hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Calgary-*Buffalo*, I would want to say as I begin here that I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's intentions and the principle of the bill have to do with drunk driving, intoxication, and we aren't dealing presently within this bill with the resources available to police departments or police services. That certainly is an issue and can be talked about under other circumstances.

I want to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for bringing forward Bill 210, the Traffic Safety Amendment Act. I know that she has spent considerable time and effort over a long period of time gathering information, talking to informed groups and associations so that she could bring this forward. Her intent is sincere, and she is speaking from the heart when she talks about individuals in her constituency that have lost loved ones due to drunken driving, so I thank her for that.

I think it is also timely that this is before us today because we are moving very, very soon to a time of year when drinking and driving does become an issue. You just need to talk to any law enforcement official, who will tell you that during the next month to month and a half they have more incidents that they have to deal with than at any other time of year.

5:00

As has been mentioned by former speakers, over the last 20 years awareness about the dangers of drinking and driving has certainly increased. In the old days a lot of people didn't see drinking and driving as a major concern for Albertans. There are probably many of us in this room that when we went to high school, college, or university didn't think twice about drinking and driving. I, like a couple of other speakers before me, want to congratulate some of the young people today for their commitment to taking very seriously the responsibility for drinking and driving. Most of us that have older teenagers or young adults can tell you that they very much rely on designated drivers or taxis or some other means to get them home. We know that they are responsible, and we as adults and our generation could actually take some very serious lessons from them as to how you do this and manage it well.

Another thing that has happened over a period of time is that the roads in this province have become busier. There are more people and more cars. Cars are moving faster, and people are all in a hurry. The reality on today's highway is very different than it was for many past generations. With these developments one would think that alcohol-related driving accidents would be on the decline. However, over the last 40 years the rates of most crimes have declined except alcohol-related driving accidents. You would think that today, with everything that is being done – all the groups that are actively making people aware, the public education, the prevention, the ad campaigns – people would be terrified of the consequences of drinking and driving and would make a continuous effort to stop doing so. However, we still see people that are intoxicated, that still get in a car and continue to drive.

During the past year Edmonton police arrested a near record number of people who were driving under the influence. I think this is a clear indication that drinking and driving is still a huge problem in this province. In fact, Alberta has the fifth highest rate of people arrested for drinking and driving among the provinces. Twice as many people are arrested for drunk driving in Alberta than in Ontario and British Columbia. Of course, as we all know, British Columbia and Ontario certainly have greater populations than Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I feel this is a shameful statistic, one that needs to be

addressed, and that's why I support Bill 210 as sponsored by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Bill 210 creates an administrative penalty for drivers who have a blood alcohol level between .05 and .08. That means that the driver who is found to have alcohol in his blood will not be permitted to drive a vehicle for 24 hours. The advantages of this suspension are clear. A driver whose licence is revoked for 24 hours will not be able to get back into his or her vehicle and cause harm to other people. That is the immediate benefit, and there are still greater longer term benefits.

What exactly is .05? How much alcohol does that amount to? Regardless of how many drinks it amounts to, people who have a blood alcohol level of .05 are impaired. Their nervous system and their ability to react quickly to emergencies are diminished, so getting these people off the road makes it a safer place for all of us.

I know it has been said many times, but people do not have the right to drive. Driving is a privilege. We've talked about driving as a privilege in this Assembly before when we discussed the hon. Member for Red Deer-South's private member's bill on graduated licencing. Indeed, it is a privilege, and it isn't a privilege that each and every country in this world has. Driving in many countries in Europe and Asia is taken very seriously, and impaired driving is taken more seriously, when even body parts such as arms and hands are cut off if you're caught as a repeat offender for impaired driving.

One of the biggest reasons I like this proposal is probably the hardest to measure and verify. What I'm referring to is the symbolic importance to the offenders of receiving this form of sanction, the 24-hour suspension. Almost all Albertans are indeed good, law-abiding citizens, who would never intentionally harm others. There are thousands upon thousands of drivers out there, both young and old, who will have a couple of drinks at the football game or go for a beer at the local pub after work. These are people who have been doing these types of things for years without hurting anybody or getting in an accident, but this, Mr. Speaker, is where the false sense of security comes into play. People think they've had a couple of drinks and then drive home countless times, and they can continue to do so without incident.

What they aren't thinking about is that they are indeed impaired. Their judgment is slow, inaccurate. Their reflexes are slightly numb. As well, with defensive driving you have to think at all times what other people are doing on the road, how other people are driving. Are they, in fact, impaired? I'm afraid that is all it takes to cause thousands and thousands of pounds of steel and glass to collide, lives to be lost, loved ones to be maimed.

Under the provisions of Bill 210 some of these casual drinkers will be given a stern warning and the inconvenience of losing their driving privileges for a mere 24 hours. It's my hope that many of these people will see this as such an unpleasant experience that next time they'll take the LRT, they'll find a designated driver, or they'll take a taxi.

Unfortunately, there's another kind of Alberta driver out there. I think this bill will help to stop them before they kill someone. These are problem drinkers, people who do not realize that they have a problem. They are the men and women who consider themselves weekend warriors. They like to go out, get intoxicated with friends, celebrate, and have a good time. These people have the potential to develop a more serious drinking problem and then take that problem on the road. For many this 24-hour suspension could be a warning sign.

If we speak of warning signs, I know one that has worked very, very well in my area has been the Denver Boot. When you live in a small community and you happen to know everyone in town and where they live, when you see a car parked alongside that house with that Denver Boot on, you know that everyone will be talking



about it in the coffee shop, around the dinner table, and it definitely impacts the person. They are very mortified. Their neighbours are mortified, and their family is mortified. So it is a warning. I think when the Denver Boot was introduced, there were probably many that felt it would not have an impact on this whole area of drinking and driving, but I can tell you that in a small community, when you know the recipient, it has made a big difference.

For someone who has never broken the law, having your licence suspended for blood alcohol concentration would send a strong message. It would send a strong message to other members of the family, to employers, employees, and friends. I, again, say very strongly: this would be a stern warning and an inconvenience.

I would also like to commend the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert in talking about what has been done in many of our high schools and with many of the programs in the province. I concur with her and think that there is a lot more that can be done with public education, with working towards greater prevention, and ongoing awareness. I know that in today's world more and more the local police are involved with many programs within the high schools, and I know that they continually work with the young people to keep them aware of many of the statistics that we've heard today. I don't think that this bill would preclude any of those programs that are ongoing, and we must ensure that they continue to be ongoing, but this bill today is dealing with a completely different matter.

5:10

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose talked at length about his role and the role of AADAC. I would like to commend AADAC. I think they have done a tremendous job over the last few years with some of their ad campaigns. One that really stands out in my mind – I think it was last year's – showed an horrific, horrible accident involving some teenagers. This young girl died in the accident, and her boyfriend had to go and tell her parents. The caption was Don't Be a Bloody Idiot: Don't Drink and Drive. I really think that particular ad campaign really was significant.

The one they're using this year I would ask you to pay attention to. They're comparing the wine glass in the gentleman's hand to a lethal weapon. As we move along in the ad, the glass does turn from a glass to a gun, and it talks about him having a lethal weapon.

I think these are powerful ads, Wetaskiwin-Camrose, and if you'd take that back to AADAC – I think they are doing an excellent job of really making you aware. They're the types of ads that you will pay attention to, and they do get your attention and those of our young people. So I thank you.

I would ask all members of this Assembly to please pay special attention to what the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is trying to achieve. I think it's just another tool that we'd be allowing law enforcement agencies in their fight against drinking and driving. It levies a small but firm penalty for those who push the limits of alcohol consumption and then drive. At the same time, the bill does not permanently affect a first-time offender. It does not mark a person for life for making an error in judgment, but it does serve as a stern warning that when a person pushes the legal limits of alcohol consumption, he is endangering his life and the lives of many, many others.

I personally would like to thank the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek for proposing this bill and inviting such stimulating debate on such an important issue. I think Bill 210 is a timely and important piece of legislation, and it deserves the ongoing attention of members of this House.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. HAVELOCK: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we call it 5:30 and that we reconvene at 8 p.m. in Committee of Supply.

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

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

[The Assembly adjourned at 5:14 p.m.]

