

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**  
**Third Session — Seventeenth Legislature**  
**10th Day**

**Wednesday, February 7, 1973.**

The Assembly met at 2:30 o'clock p.m.  
On the Orders of the Day.

**WELCOME TO STUDENTS**

**Hon. W.E. Smishek** (Regina North East): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce to you and to the Members of this Legislature, a group of 21 grade eight students from the Haultain School of the City of Regina. They are seated in the west gallery and are accompanied by their principal, Mr. Falkowsky. I should like to extend to them a warm welcome to the Legislature and express the hope that their visit this afternoon will be a pleasant, informative and educational one.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. G.B. Grant** (Regina Whitmore Park): — Mr. Speaker, through you and to this Assembly I should like to introduce 85 students from a school in my constituency and I would ask the Members to pay note to the name of the school, Grant Road School. They are in the east gallery and the Speaker's Gallery, representing grades six and seven of that school. They are under the direction of their vice principal, Mr. Molder, Mr. Hart and Mrs. Newman. I know we all sincerely welcome them here today and we trust they will enjoy in this Legislature and their visit of the building following.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. E.F. Gardner** (Moosomin): — Mr. Speaker, I should like to introduce to the Legislature a group of 45 grade eight students from Grenfell. They are in the east gallery. I hope they have enjoyed their tour so far and I trust they will find the deliberations here educational. I am looking forward to meeting them briefly before they leave. I am sure that we all wish them a safe journey home.

**Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**QUESTIONS**

**RAISE IN PRICE OF NATURAL GAS**

**Mr. D.G. Stuart** (Leader of the Opposition): — Today I have a question to direct to the Premier. Some few weeks ago and even as late as a few days ago, Premier Lougheed of Alberta has been announcing his intention to raise price of natural gas from roughly 16 cents to as high as 24 cents and has even announced that he intends to see that it is raised to as high as 32 cents, which would in effect double the price of natural gas.

Since we shall be affected, probably at least one-third of the gas we use here in Saskatchewan comes from Trans Canada at Unity, this will have a very serious effect, an unacceptably increased cost effect on the gas users in this province, both domestic and industrial. However, I think I can have some sympathy and some agreement with the stated aims of Premier Lougheed, which is to get more money for his resource, the resource

**Mr. Speaker:** — Will the Hon. Member just present his question. He is making too many speeches on questions.

**Mr. Steuart:** — Mr. Speaker, please bear with me. I want to set this background for the question I have to ask. I have some sympathy for his other stated aim which is at last to strike a blow for the prairies as compared to Eastern Canada. For once Ontario is finding the shoe on the other foot. Somebody in Western Canada is charging them, I think maybe it might be too high, but certainly a fair return for something that we manufacture or we own in Western Canada. This is a refreshing change.

My question to the Premier is, this as it now stands will have a serious effect on Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan people. I waited for some time to see what he intended to do. To my knowledge he has done nothing. My question is why has he not called an emergency meeting of the Prairie Economic Council, the three prairie Premiers, along with Premier Schreyer whose people will also be as seriously affected, ask the Government of Alberta to deal differently with the prairie people, for once to act as a region? This was the philosophy behind the development of the Prairie Economic Council. I realize there are difficulties under the BNA Act. But I am just as sure that a way could be found to develop a two price system that would in effect treat the prairies as a region and treat them differently than Eastern Canada. I am asking the Premier to try and convene such a meeting if Premier Schreyer won't go along — I am sure he will — even to deal bi-laterally with Saskatchewan.

**Hon. A.E. Blakeney (Premier):** — Mr. Speaker, that sounded rather like a request rather than a question, a request that the Government pursue a particular course of action. As he indicated, he asks the Premier to pursue a particular course of action. That is not a question.

I would be happy to comment on his general comment. Firstly, we are in a happy position in Saskatchewan of having a relatively small percentage of our gas coming from Alberta compared with all the other provinces. Because of the providence of earlier Governments, quite a bit earlier, I may say, in getting gas in storage we get the bulk of our gas from our own resources, some of it indeed from Alberta but more in Saskatchewan.

There have been some informal discussions. I wouldn't want to suggest they had pointed directly in the direction that the Leader of the Opposition has suggested but there have been some informal discussions along the general line that he suggests. There is scheduled a meeting of the Prairie Economic Council for next month and we anticipate that this general subject together with some other subjects by way of forming a common point of view, if I may phrase it that way, for the prairies in dealing with Eastern Canada will be high on the agenda. It will certainly take into account the suggestions which he has made.

As I say whether or not the particular proposals of the Government of Alberta are particularly serious at this time, they are potentially serious and we accordingly welcome his suggestion and will attempt to work along the line which he suggests.

**Mr. Steuart:** — Mr. Speaker, a supplementary question. The Premier of Alberta very early in his administration made it pretty clear that he intended to do something about the price of natural gas. Did the SPC or through the Premier's orders or intervention, did they obtain more gas in Alberta? Did they increase their holdings of natural gas in Alberta?

**Hon. K. Thorson** (Minister of Mineral Resources): — Mr. Speaker, I think it appropriate that I should respond to that. With respect to the particular activities of the Saskatchewan Power Corporation in the matter of acquisition of gas reserves, I think clearly we have not time today to go into that and we shall undoubtedly have an opportunity to do that in the Crown Corporations Committee when the annual report for 1972 is under consideration.

I just say this, that we have taken two steps to increase our security for natural gas in respect of Alberta's supplies. One, by entering into exploration programs in Alberta in joint ventures with other corporations, and two, by purchase of the Unity line so that we are in effect not dependent upon Trans Canada Pipelines for the gas that they used to transport on that line and delivered at Unity. We now buy it ourselves in Alberta and transport it ourselves and therefore we are not dependent upon Trans Canada to that extent.

## PROVINCIAL HIGHWAY CONTRACTS

**Mr. J.G. Lane** (Lumsden): — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I should like to ask a question of the Hon. Minister of Industry and Commerce (Mr. Thorson). Has there been any change in the Government's policy with regard to the matter of provincial preference on inter-provincial bidding on provincial highway contracts?

**Hon. K. Thorson** (Minister of Mineral Resources): — I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I don't understand the question nor do I understand why it is directed to me if it is a matter of highway contracts. I think it more appropriately should be directed to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Kramer).

**Mr. Lane:** — In the absence of the Minister of Highways, I thought perhaps the Minister of Industry and Commerce could answer the question. Perhaps the Premier then can answer the question. Has there been any change in the Government policy with regard to preference on highway contract tendering?

**Mr. Speaker:** — I think this type of question should be asked of the Minister. It is really, in my opinion, not an emergency question in the House. It can be raised with the Minister when his Estimates are up. I think this period should be used for emergency questions and not for details of information of departments.

## MOTION

### SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY

Hon. R. Romanow: (Attorney General) moved, seconded by Mr. Thibault (Melfort-Kinistino):

That a special committee consisting of nine Members of this Assembly, to be named at a later date, be appointed to conduct an enquiry into all matters relating to highway traffic safety, including a consideration of the number of accidents and the loss of life and the causes thereof and preventative and rehabilitative measures which are being or might be taken to reduce the same and including the laws relating to highway traffic and enforcement thereof;

And that such committee will have power to sit during the inter-sessional period and during any legislative session, except when the Assembly is sitting;

And that such committee will have power to send for persons, papers and records and to examine witnesses under oath; to engage such advisors and assistants as are required for the purpose of an enquiry; to require the assistance of staff employed by departments and agencies of the Government and to hold meetings at and away from the seat of Government in order that the fullest representations may be received without unduly inconveniencing those desiring to be heard;

And that this special committee be instructed to submit its final report to the Assembly with all convenient speed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, today we will be involved, I think, in a very important debate as it affects all of the people of the Province of Saskatchewan.

The motion that I will be moving at the conclusion of my remarks will be to establish a nine member committee to be named at a later date, which committee will conduct an enquiry into all matters relating to highway traffic and to highway safety. We will be asking the committee, as the motion says, to look at the matter of considering ways and means that accidents can be prevented and cutting down the loss of life and injury on our roads. So, Mr. Speaker, this is an important debate because this debate will enact a special committee of the Legislature on highway traffic safety.

Our civilization has given birth, I think, to many problems quite obviously. One that sometimes seems almost insoluble at times is the problem of highway traffic and the problem of loss of life, injury and the mounting rise in property damage. It was said that in 1908 there were only two cars in the State of Ohio. Yet, somehow those two cars were found in an accident. This accident, if in fact the legend is true and it did take place, portended ill for the future and might have served as a warning to future generations. However, like so many lessons that are obvious to us in retrospect, society appears to have neglected and still appears to neglect this very important problem of highway traffic safety.

By the mid 1950s it was apparent that the carnage on the highways was not tolerable in a civilized society. In fact, I think it was the United States Army which kicked off the contemporary debate on highway safety. They almost did it inadvertently. In 1954 the United States Army presented its annual reports to the United States Congress. Buried within a multitude of facts and statistics of that army document was the fact that during the Korean War the United States lost more soldiers at home on the US highways than they had lost in the same period on the battlefields abroad. One would have thought that revelation of 1954, and it was startling to me when the fact was brought to my attention, would have ended the need for any further debate about highway traffic safety. But as I have said, rather than ending the debate, in fact, it seems like the contemporary debate only started. Since the 1950s and even until today we see the debate raging between those who call for more safety on the highways, and those who either through self-interest or perhaps just neglect drag their heels on this important issue.

Initially, one of the first responses to the question of highway traffic safety was for society to move to the matter of better highways and better roads. It was felt that the solution lay in improving roads. So a tremendous amount of effort was spent in that direction. I admit, Mr. Speaker, that the results have certainly been very good in recent years. Highway engineers have brought their craft to a high degree of perfection. So much so that I think hazards caused by highway design are certainly not nearly as common as they once were and with the continued efforts and work of engineers this problem I think will be moving gradually to total eradication. Still the matter of improving highways in the construction and design is something of concern which this committee that I shall be proposing ought to properly and carefully study.

It is only in more recent days and years that society has begun to realize that highway safety involves something more than just consideration of the highway. It is obviously an inter-relationship between three factors, the highway, the driver and his automobile.

The 1960s brought consumers advocates such as Ralph Nader of the United States. Everyone knows that he made a valuable contribution throughout all of North America in pointing out the need for increased safety and better design for our cars today. The logic of his arguments was overwhelming. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that an aroused public and consumer minded governments have gradually begun to force a change in the North American automobile. Never again will a car be based solely or designed solely for comfort, convenience or flashy looks with no thought for safety features. I am not for a moment suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that automobiles are perfect as far as safety is concerned, far from it. There is acknowledged to be a great deal of room for improvement in the design and construction. I am sure, however, that we have made some strides in this area and I am confident that we can look forward to even greater improvements in the future. Again, like in the matter of studying highways as it relates to traffic safety, perhaps this new proposed committee will also be able to study the question of safety of automobiles as it relates to traffic safety.

Mr. Speaker, society has been, however, far less successful in attempting to come to grips with the third corner of that

safety triangle, the driver. Sporadic attempts have been made at such things as driving training clinics, education programs, tough laws with respect to driving. However, in my judgement all of these attempts have been by-and-large piecemeal. As one might expect success has been limited. Perhaps our failure to come to terms with the problem of drivers might be expected. After all, to some extent roads and machinery can be improved by rules, formula and technology. The drivers, being as they are, human beings, perhaps it is far too complex to apply any simplistic formula such as increased educational programs or tougher laws or clinics or what have you.

Members of the Legislature and Mr. Speaker, these problems have been magnified in importance in this province because we are experiencing, today, an unprecedented rise in accidents. Last year, Saskatchewan, and these are the figures that are available for 1972, last year Saskatchewan saw one of the greatest increases in any single year in its history in car accidents. I believe the slogan used by Saskatchewan Government Insurance sums up the situation nicely but tragically — ‘1972 was not a good year’.

Some of the most complete statistics in this regard come to us through SGIO. These statistics indicate that all classes of accidents have increased, the major ones and the fender benders, so-called. Indications are that the number of accidents have increased in the country and increased in the cities. What evidence we have also suggests that accidents have increased right across the board when you look at it by age groups. Accidents have dramatically increased for younger people, for middle-aged drivers and even the older citizens of this province.

The total number of claims against The Automobile Accident Insurance Act has increased by a phenomenal 22 per cent in the year 1972. As if that was not bad enough, the average cost per claim has also increased by something in the neighborhood of 12 per cent. The result has been a staggering increase in the number of claims against the AAIA — Automobile Accident Insurance Act.

The total number of claims is evidenced by this increase. A record of accidents is about 33.4 per cent more in 1972 than in the year before that in 1971. Quite obviously increased accidents mean increased claims, increased claims mean increased payouts and the result is a tremendous pressure on the fund of The Automobile Accident Insurance Act, pressure which will result in Government, as we are now doing, carefully examining AAIA rates for the coming year to see if any changes must be made to take into account this fact.

As has been said, time and time again, driving habits are a major role in determining the rates of insurance that we pay in the Province of Saskatchewan for our accidents.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect of increasing accidents, another aspect apart from the drain on the AAIA, which is after all an insurance fund, is the question of fatality. The fatality rate is very disturbing, whereas the number of accident claims increased by 28 per cent or six per cent more. This would seem to indicate that not only are accidents increasing in frequency but they are, Sir, increasing in severity.

Sometimes I think society has become very callous, cynical

and hardened to the story of death, destruction and misery on the highways, cynical to an amazing degree. I wonder how many in this House know that in 1972, using these figures, 133 operators of cars were killed and another 4,065 operators were not killed but injured in varying degrees? That is approximately equivalent to killing the entire population of a small community of Saskatchewan, or injuring the entire town, say of Nipawin, Saskatchewan.

Then when you look at the number of deaths of passengers as opposed to operators, 82 in 1972 killed; 4,118 passengers injured in 1972. You would not only have in addition to small a town of Saskatchewan and towns like Nipawin, you would have to add to that passengers killed or maimed, of the size of Avonlea and perhaps even the size of a town like Humboldt in the Province of Saskatchewan.

I think these are very staggering figures. Additional numbers were hurt on bicycles, motorcycles, snowmobiles, tractors and the like.

Mr. Speaker, if this type of figure was the result of a flood or an earthquake, it would attract world wide attention and immediate action by the Members of this House. But because it occurs on our highways, and maybe we are all callous, maybe society is callous, it passes almost unnoticed. I think herein lies a very important aspect of this proposal in setting up a special traffic committee. Not only could it investigate the matters of highways and drivers and cars but also one important function would be to publicize again, to the people of our province, the severity and the loss with respect to accidents and damages in the Province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, why all of these accidents? Well, basically I suppose that will be for the committee to try and find out for this Legislature and to give the Legislature advice thereon. I can say, however, that 1972 is not totally without precedent. I think it is certainly the worst year, but not without precedent. If we examine the statistics we see that accidents took a similar jump in the early 1960s. In talking this matter over with officials of SGIO, the Highway Traffic Board, trying to find out what was the reason behind this, the best answer offered to me was that we should take note of one common fact. In the 1960s and 1972 the common element is that the increase comes directly after a severe economic recession.

That is obviously not an explanation or an answer but it is a fact. That when the economic climate is in recession, it appears that the drivers are not on the roads, when it appears to be somewhat expansionary and on the uprise, the car drivers are back on the road, more miles travelled, more danger, more accidents. I am not satisfied with that explanation nor do I submit to this House that it is the explanation, but it is something for the committee to consider.

Well, Members will note that my analysis and my speech is cautious. The statistics are rather cautiously analyzed and the reason is quite obvious, Mr. Speaker. These statistics raise more questions than anyone can answer. The statistics can outline the state of highway traffic safety but they cannot provide the answers for remedying this tremendous problem. It is to answer these questions that I am going to propose to this House and to the people of the province that we strike

this special committee on highway traffic safety and report back to us with a view to implementing and perhaps recommending new legislation.

Mr. Speaker, before discussing this committee on highway traffic safety in a little more detail, I should like briefly to discuss the former committee on highway traffic and safety set up by this Legislature in 1965. Some of the younger Members of the House certainly were not in the House at the time but they will be interested in knowing that, in fact, a resolution on a Private Member's Bill from the Opposition was introduced in 1965.

To the credit of the Opposition in introducing that motion, the NDP, and to the credit of the Liberal Government of the day, the motion was adopted into a government motion and, in fact, a highway traffic safety committee was adopted. I suppose it's a sign of just how insecure public life can be or the life of some politicians can be when one looks back at the composition of that committee of 1965, less than 10 years old, and one notes that only three Members who were on that committee in 1965 are still Members of this Legislature in 1973, Messrs. Whelan, Thibault, and Loken from the Opposition side.

The resolution which set up the 1965 committee directed that 1965 committee consider and report on 'all matters relating to highway traffic and safety'. In setting out the terms of reference of the 1965 committee, a particular reference was also made, to quote:

The relationship between the drinking of alcohol and accidents.

54 recommendations were made in 1965 by that committee. One of those 54 recommendations was to the effect that it be made an offence to drive with a blood alcohol content in excess of .08 per cent. Eventually this recommendation was fully implemented by the Federal House of Commons and the Canadian Criminal Code. There was, at the provincial level, complementary legislation under the licensing powers of the Province inserted in The Vehicles Act, administered by the Highway Traffic Board.

In the years that followed the 1965 committee this law of .08, the so-called tough drinking and driving law, assumed considerable importance in the eyes of the Canadian public. Strict enforcement of drinking and driving laws came to be regarded by many of us, by many organized groups, Saskatchewan Safety Councils and the like, as a cure-all for all of the traffic safety problems posed on the highways.

Many Saskatchewan people even today quite strongly and I say quite legitimately, hold the view that if only tough laws to end drinking and driving could be strictly enforced, most of the traffic safety problems could be eliminated or would disappear. Well, it is a credit to that 1965 committee that their final report indicates that they never really did entertain the delusion of thinking that tough drinking and driving laws were going to be the be-all and the end-all with respect to highway safety and the carnage and the loss on highways.

Mr. Speaker, it is my view that these laws have served a very useful purpose. Personally, I speak now for myself and if I can divorce myself from the Cabinet for one moment, personally



I fully support extremely rigid drinking-driving laws and I can tell this House that since I have been the Attorney General, this Government has enforced drinking-driving laws as vigorously, if not more vigorously, than any other Government in the history of this province. In fact, since the election of June 23, 1971, that wasn't the date that I was sworn in as Attorney General, but shortly after that, to January 10th, and I will come to that in a moment, I don't believe that one restricted licence was ever restored by Cabinet on a plea of clemency as a result of anybody being caught for impaired driving of .08 or that range of offence. I think there was one exception and that was where a man was charged twice with two different offences arising from the same occasion which was the policy of this Government and the former administration to treat as one offence.

We maintained a tough drinking-driving law and whenever appeals were made they were turned down. I suppose in many ways if I had my own way that is the way I should like to have the law still remain today. It is easy to adopt that policy and it is understandable for all of our people.

However, Mr. Speaker, on July 15, 1972 the Federal Government at Ottawa enacted an amendment to the Canadian Criminal Code which, as everybody knows, is a statute of the Federal House of Commons. Section 238 of the Criminal Code gave the judge the power to prohibit a person from driving and as long as it was limited to prohibition that power ran like two rivers concurrently with the power in The Vehicles Act which made it a mandatory six months' suspension.

These two acts, federally the Criminal Code and provincially The Vehicles Act, were complementary and they were in harmony. But that harmony was disturbed on July 15, 1972 when the Federal House of Commons introduced an amendment in Section 238 which said not only can judges have the power to prohibit but they will now have the power to exempt certain prohibitions from the prohibition orders. Putting it in simple laymen's language that meant that a magistrate could, under the Criminal Code, say to a person who is convicted of a .08 offence, as an example, that I will now give you back your licence between the hours of 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. because you have shown to my satisfaction that it is a hardship case. They couldn't do that before the July 15, 1972 amendment.

We objected to this federal amendment. We sent the objection to the Deputy Minister of Justice. I raised it at a meeting that we had in Regina in September of 1972. How did they handle this problem? We were not successful in convincing federal authorities and the amendment went ahead as planned.

Mr. Speaker, Members of this House can see that quite readily where we had harmony in the federal Criminal Code law and the provincial Vehicles Act law up to and prior to July 15, 1972, the Criminal Code amendment brought this law into disharmony. One could imagine an ordinary citizen who appears in court on a .08 case, coming before a magistrate, making out a case for a hardship licence, if I may term it that way, and getting that licence returned under the Criminal Code and running smack dab into the conflict of the mandatory six month prohibition under The Vehicles Act.

I say this conflict is unfair to the public. We can't leave our people feeling that the law talks with two tongues,

if I may describe it that way. We can't let the average citizen come to a court of law, a court he respects and has confidence in, that he will be treated fairly and uniformly, to be dealt with in one way, then only to be dealt with in another way when he deals with the provincial Highway Traffic Board.

And so in an attempt to try and resolve this conflict I decided to recommend to Cabinet and they accepted, the establishment of a Driver Licence Appeal Committee, which committee is attached as a part of the apparatus of the Highway Traffic Board. The idea of the Driver Licence Appeal Committee would be to operate where there was this conflict between say, a magistrate giving a restricted licence back and the person facing a mandatory six-month period. Where there was this conflict it ought not to be the Cabinet that decides whether or not the conflict should be resolved. We should try to bring the two laws into harmony without weakening or lessening the 1968 amendments on the six-months' mandatory Vehicle Act prohibition.

I want to emphasize to the Members of this House and to the people of Saskatchewan that the Driver Licence Appeal Committee did not operate before January 10, 1973 or thereabouts. There were no returns of any licences in the years 1972 and since I was appointed Attorney General, June 23, 1971. There have been limited returns of licences based on recommendations of the Driver Licence Appeal Committee only since January 10, 1973. I want to make that abundantly clear and I will tell you why.

Because it shows, as I said earlier, that my personal attitude, if I could divorce myself of external forces, would be not to give anybody back his licence. Perhaps a case can be made of the situation that I will tell Members of the House about. A 55-year old man, married, three children, limited grade seven education and his occupation is driving buses, empty buses from the point of manufacture to the customer. He had not one conviction under The Vehicles Act in 25 years of driving and he gets convicted coming home from a party on a reading of .11 or barely over .08. Do we say to that man and his family that we don't give back his licence and we condemn him at 55 and his family to welfare if he was a transgressor on but this one occasion? Which one of us can say that, "there go I but for the grace of God"? I am in conflict on this business of mandatory six months. But it is more than just a moral conflict, I am now in a legal conflict because of the Criminal Code amendment. So we seek to resolve this conflict by the Driver Licence Appeal Committee operative since January 10 or thereabouts. I don't know the exact date but I could find it out for Members of the House if necessary. And furthermore, maybe the Driver Licence Appeal Committee could do the job that a magistrate can't do because of pressures of time, that a Cabinet or an Attorney General can't do it because perhaps of human bias and prejudice, and that is to give back the licence to the truly needy case, to the 55-year old whom I mentioned in my case.

I want to tell this House that I regard the Driver Licence Appeal Committee as purely experimental. We are going to watch to see what effects it has on accidents. We don't want the Driver Licence Appeal Committee to open up restricted licences and to lessen what we think are the severities against the problem of drinking and driving. If it doesn't work, I have said before and I say again in this House, we will scrap the

Driver Licence Appeal Committee. We will be carefully reviewing its operations. I am advised that it will be carefully screening the applications and it has set out rigid guidelines which it intends to follow. I say to the Members of the House, we have a good and honest committee headed by an excellent magistrate, Judge Flynn of the City of Regina, formerly of the City of Moose Jaw. I know that all Members of this House would share with me the hope that we can give this committee a chance to operate, to assess its operation. I want to make one point in passing, a similar committee has been operating in the Province of Manitoba for quite some time apparently with favorable results as far as the Manitoba Legislature is concerned. At least that is the advice I was given at the last meeting with my counterpart, the Attorney General from the Province of Manitoba.

So, Mr. Speaker, undoubtedly one aspect of the work of this committee will be the problem of the drinking driver. I hope the committee will examine drinking-driving laws. If we give a restricted licence perhaps we could set up a program of education for this drinking driver so that if he gets the licence he must couple it with some reform, some proven reform. We don't have these programs. Maybe the Appeal Committee won't work. I'll be pleased to hear from the special committee. Maybe we should realize that there is a high degree of repetition of drinking drivers. Those are the ones who get caught, they are the ones that create the accidents, maybe that is what the facts will show. On the other hand maybe it will be quite clear that it is the casual driver who is going to be at fault as much as the hardened drinker. As I say, Mr. Speaker, tough drinking-driving laws in my own personal conviction have played a good role in society. But in 1972 I didn't give back one licence and yet we have 28 per cent increase in fatalities over 1971. We had more fatalities and more accidents in 1972 than at any other time in the history of the Province of Saskatchewan and we didn't give back licences. How do we explain that? Obviously saying that tough drinking-driving laws are the only answer to keep accident rates down is just not good enough, it has to be probed deeper.

Mr. Speaker, in setting up the terms of reference in this committee we have thrown a wide net. The terms will ask the committee to inquire into all matters relating to highway traffic safety including consideration of the number of accidents loss of life and the cause thereof, rehabilitative measures and the like. Mr. Speaker, I believe the legislative committee will do a good job. It will serve the people of Saskatchewan. The motoring public will have a unique and rare chance to make itself heard as well. Mr. Speaker, we fight bitterly in a partisan way in this House sometimes but I know that all Members; Liberal and NDP, will not be partisan or personal in their comments on this issue, that will show to all of Saskatchewan the strength of legislative committees. I predict that like the committee of 1965 this committee of 1973 will again put Saskatchewan in the forefront of traffic safety throughout all of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to move this motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. J.G. Lane** (Lumsden): — Mr. Speaker, it is with a great deal of concern that we in the Opposition enter into this debate on the motion just introduced by the Hon. Attorney General (Mr. Romanow). We have noted the very depressing scene that was painted by the Attorney General in his remarks and we enter this debate with several concerns and our concerns come about because of some of the following factors.

In 1965 a similar committee was established by this Legislature by the previous Liberal Government and that committee was welcomed by both sides of the House. I think, Mr. Speaker, that committee did an excellent job and many of its recommendations are now law. I do not want it construed that I do not want a periodic review of legislation because I feel that all legislation and all programs should be reviewed on a regular basis. But, Mr. Speaker, my concern stems from the fact that some of the recommendations accepted unanimously by the NDP Members are now becoming political footballs in the hands of the Government opposite.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to refer to the recommendations of that committee. I am going to refer in particular to a unanimous recommendation, 'that the continued improvement of highway design is desirable'. In that recommendation on page 19 of the report of the committee of 1965, the committee specifically refers to the improvement of Saskatoon's highway accident picture as a result of the opening of the Idylwyld Freeway and the committee recommendation goes on to state that the Idylwyld Freeway shows the merits of an urban freeway and that the Urban Freeway Program should be continued. That was an unanimous recommendation of both sides of the House, Mr. Speaker.

We then have the Minister of Highways (Mr. Kramer) in the Throne Speech Debate, Mr. Speaker, referring to that same Idylwyld Freeway as a fiasco and a disgrace and a waste of public moneys. That makes us very concerned about what the Government's intentions are. The Hon. Minister of Highways has also gone on record stating that there will be no more, as he calls them, "champagne highways", in spite of the recommendations of the previous highway committee. The Minister of Highways has already made decisions that there is going to be an emphasis switch again, in spite of and contrary to the recommendations of the previous committee. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Highways has gone on public record as making specific recommendations already without the necessity of a committee. He has established his own committee study within the department, this is public record, and he dropped hints of disagreement, and I am referring to the Leader-Post of July 18, page 3:

At one point, Mr. Kramer dropped hints of disagreement in the department over four-lane highways. He said he personally favored the safety factors involved in construction but some of his engineers discount those factors.

Again, completely contrary to what he said in the House the other day. The Minister tended to support development of Highway 11 and to rebuild unused sections, a comment by the Minister which indicates that he is right into the full question of highway construction, one of the criteria involved in the committee proposed by the Attorney General.

Mr. Speaker, the committee will have no value whatsoever

as long as the Minister of Highways is going to take a cheap, political approach to highway traffic safety. Another example, of the Minister of Highway's approach, Mr. Speaker, I am going to refer again to the Leader-Post of November 13, 1972:

With regard to an upgrading of the 28 mile school bus route from Waterhen Lake Reserve to Dorintosh where the Minister refused to take any criticism and refused to take responsibility for the deterioration of that highway

And what the Minister said at that point, Mr. Speaker, was the following:

However, Mr. Kramer said what was needed was more cost sharing programs from the Federal Government. He launched an angry assault on Ottawa for allegedly failing to live up to its responsibilities

And then he refers to the amount that Saskatchewan is receiving on federal highway expenditures. He goes on further, Mr. Speaker:

It was time the Federal Government accepted some of the responsibility for roads leading from reserves and not on reserves

Mr. Speaker, that's what the Minister tried to do, pass the blame on to Ottawa for highways that he didn't keep up in his false economy move. As I say, that committee will not work as long as there is a cheap political approach from the Minister of Highways.

Mr. Speaker, probably one of the first suggestions that should be made was that a moratorium be put on speeches by the Minister of Highways (Mr. Kramer) during this committee.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lane:** — Mr. Speaker, many of the recommendations made by that 1965 committee have now become law, recommendations with regard to driving while exceeding .08; recommendations regarding driver testing; recommendations that safety be improved at school bus stops; recommendations that the point system and the previous colored licence system be abolished; and many specific recommendations with regard to standard auto equipment. All of these have been implemented, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the 1965 committee also recommended that a vehicle safety program be instituted whereby vehicles would be made subject to periodic tests. In 1969 the previous Liberal Government passed legislation making such a program possible. Unfortunately, through the fault of no one that program has not been implemented. The criteria for establishing that program were unable to be determined. The program in Alberta has been proven wrong in concept and British Columbia's program has been proven not strict enough.

In light of the failures of other intersessional committees, Mr. Speaker, to make any recommendations and yet spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, there will be no excuse for this proposed committee at least to have major recommendations in an

interim report if one is tendered.

Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition will support this committee. However, Mr. Speaker, we reserve the right to withdraw from this committee if the Minister of Highways plays politics with highways and safety and with the committee or if the committee is not fulfilling its function other than making political tours. Mr. Speaker, we have major changes in the department without the necessity of a committee. We have had major changes by the Attorney General's Department without the question of a committee. Mr. Speaker, we will oppose unnecessary travel by this committee and we note that the previous committee only held public hearings in Saskatoon and Regina.

We note the actions taken by this Government already, as I have stated, by the Minister of Highways and the Attorney General. Decisions have already been made without the necessity of a committee. A Driver Licence Appeal Committee has been established to which the Hon. Attorney General referred. The largest percentage of applicants to that committee, I am informed, are those requesting a licence to drive to work after a conviction of impaired driving or related drinking and driving offences. Now the Attorney General has made it quite clear, Mr. Speaker, that the review committee did not come into existence until January 10. Mr. Speaker, we in the Opposition cannot accept this as being a reason for avoiding any liability or any responsibility by that committee to an accident record in 1972. I think that when we note that the Return tabled in this House by the Attorney General indicates that from his date of January 10 until January 30, 285 people have applied to the Driver Licence Appeal Committee — 285 in a period of 20 days — indicates to the Opposition Members, Mr. Speaker, that the existence of that committee was well known, the proposals for that committee were well known throughout the Province of Saskatchewan and we submit, Mr. Speaker, that was an influencing factor on many people who felt, knowing that the committee was coming, that they could drive and get a restricted licence.

We feel that rather than take that approach, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the fact that highway fatalities are up 25 per cent in the Province of Saskatchewan and in 1972 we have had two figures 275 or 274 fatal accidents. There were 214 in 1971; 270 in 1970, 240 in 1969. Mr. Speaker, there has been a progression of traffic deaths, an increase in the last two years. We submit, Mr. Speaker, that the proper Government approach when the Criminal Code amendments were made was to go on a publicity campaign, without using any Cabinet Ministers' pictures, stating to the people of Saskatchewan that the Government maintains its stand and that there will be no restricted licences pending a review by a driver traffic committee.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Lane:** — If, Mr. Speaker, it had been made clear to the public that there would be no review, the knowledge that was pervasive throughout this province of the existence of a review committee would not have had an effect. Mr. Speaker, we submit that the Government action in that regard was wrong and we criticize them.

Mr. Speaker, we realize that hardships are caused by this mandatory six-month legislation but there is no excuse for a

person who needs his licence to drive while exceeding .08 if he knows of the legislation. A proper advertising campaign that has been in existence in this province indicated to all the people of Saskatchewan that such a program was in existence. I would not so oppose the Government's actions in this regard, Mr. Speaker, except that the hard, tough approach has worked. Lives were saved and that alone is justification for these harsh penalties.

We note, Mr. Speaker, that all statistics indicate that the harsh penalty worked on the moderate drinker and have no effect on the chronic drinker and driver. Mr. Speaker, perhaps he should have been banned from driving, period.

We question, Mr. Speaker, in light of previous legislative committees that have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money, without reports, without recommendations, whether this committee will serve any purpose. Restricted licences have been decided upon, highway design decisions have been decided upon. Traffic deaths are up and we hope that because of this very reason itself, Mr. Speaker, that the committee will serve some purpose. We, in the Opposition, will take any opportunity to cut the increase in traffic deaths in the Province of Saskatchewan and for that reason we will support the committee.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. A. Thibault** (Melfort-Kinistino): — Mr. Speaker, in rising to second the motion, it makes me sad in a way and it makes me glad in a way. I feel sad for the loss of life and the people who suffered, glad because the Legislature has decided to do something about it.

I should also like to remind the Member who has just taken his seat (Mr. Lane) that there is one recommendation that should have been carried out in the 1965-1966 report and that was the recommendation that the committee continue its work to report to the Legislature periodically because of changes in conditions on the highways today come very rapidly. Cars are getting more powerful and sometimes manufacturers make serious mistakes. So, Mr. Speaker, if that committee had continued its work — and I am one that is very strongly in favor of committees to bring Parliament closer to the people — I'm not going to try and make any remarks that could jeopardize the work of this committee.

Now I want to put it this way — from the time a child is conceived he is already in traffic. Therefore, he must learn to live in traffic at a very early age. Yes, last year we killed 275 people and that's a lot of people. There are many causes. Some say it is the economic conditions, more money, more travelling, and more booze. There are three other factors involved in the situation where we can improve the safety of our highways. First, education; second, engineering; and third, enforcement. We, as Legislators, must decide to what extent we are going to use each one of these three factors. So it will be our job on the committee to make recommendations.

In the education end of it, I think church leaders in many countries have already stressed the moral responsibility in this matter — 'thou shalt not kill'. And I think it is not stressed enough today. I think traffic education should start

at “Sesame Street” in order to develop a better social attitude towards the rule of law which is in bad shape in our country today.

In 1961 I brought a resolution into this House, seconded by the Member for Shellbrook, Mr. Thiessen, asking to have more traffic education in our schools. It was frowned upon by some Members of the Legislature because it would interfere with the curriculum. Mr. Speaker, I think we’ve got to go for practical education and traffic safety should be part of the education that we give our children in our schools.

Now let’s talk about alcohol. It’s not to brag, I’m not a heavy user, 10 ounces will do me a whole year. But if alcohol is a disease then let us treat it as a disease. We don’t send people to court who are sick and throw them in jail because they are sick so let us treat it as a disease. Let us try to teach our drinkers if they are bound to drink to sort their drinking from their driving. It is nobody’s business how much a person drinks but when he drinks and drives then it becomes the public’s business and it’s up to us as legislators to do something about it. Liquor is with us and so are the automobiles. Drivers must learn to divide the two.

I also want to point out to this House that last year we took in \$26 million in liquor profits, yet, less than \$1 million was spent on rehabilitation. I think we had better look at that figure.

Mr. Speaker, in 1961 Medicine Hat had a program that kept them five years without a traffic fatality. There was an example for the whole province, for all of Canada to copy. Everybody was involved. The churches, clubs, schools, local government, everyone was involved in it. What a terrific result. We can do the same thing today. In the trip to Cook County, Chicago — and I want to say that I was on the Liquor Committee and the trip to Chicago was not a waste of time and money and I don’t accept the remarks that going to see certain places is a waste of time and money — I learned that Cook County has a program that has already been copied by many countries in the world, including two of our provinces, the Province of Ontario and the Province of Alberta. And to make a long story short, it’s a very attractive program. It helps the people more to learn how to drive rather than using the punitive measures which create revulsion towards the rule of law. I think I would use enforcement as a very last method but I think we can do more by education and teaching a person responsibility, that he must police himself. Now on one of the tours we were told that they had set up a simulated accident on the highway with dead bodies and cars lying on the side of the highway and they set radars on each side of the accident. They took the speed of the motorists as they went by. It had an effect, mind you, for five miles. At the end of five miles they were right up to the same speed again. Are you going to set up policemen at every five miles on the highways? We have to develop a better attitude by the general public as a whole.

Now we talk about engineering and a lot can be done about engineering. Standardization of our signs — in some cities it is just an awful mix up. If you want to know what street you are on you’ve got to look at four corners before you find the sign, and there is no standard way how they are laid out. Highway approaches, you find these highway approaches are



square, you find that a ditch when you come up against one of these approaches are sloped three to one, it's almost certain death. But if those approaches were sloped ten to one the chances are the automobile could slide over it and save lives.

Now you have telephone poles and power lines that should be out of the ditches and from the proximity of the highways. That would save lives as well. I don't think that we take enough pains in checking our accidents. When we have an airplane crash we spend millions of dollars to find out what caused the crash. Yet when we have an automobile accident very little is done to check what really caused the accident. I think the brakes and steering and tires should not be overlooked in the report of accidents.

Mr. Speaker, you know air time goes by very fast and I'm going to deal shortly with enforcement. As I said a moment ago, it should be the last resort. And it should be geared to driver improvement and not punishment. In the States in one of the cities they use Teen Courts where the youngsters had their own jury to judge the young drivers and the terrific results. Punishment does not improve driving whatsoever and it does develop a bad attitude. I don't say we shouldn't use punishment. There are times when you just can't get to a person any other way. Another thing that's being said in our society today is that the program of highway safety is geared, not geared to driver improvement, but to finance the government. Hauling people into court and fining them is quite a game in our society today and there's a very bad impression about that one. I think something has to be done there.

For instance, it reminds me of when I was a small child and we had a gopher problem. The municipality decided to pay two cents a tail for gophers. They brought the tails into the municipal office and collected two cents. We made a little money, that's how I got my start. Now did it destroy the gophers? It didn't do anything. All we wound up with was bobtailed gophers. And the little gophers had tails on and we made more money pulling the tails out of the little gophers. So our laws are enforced in the same way. Haul them in, take \$25, they walk out of the courtroom madder than heck. Excuse me, but did it do anything towards the attitude? No, nothing. You've destroyed the attitude. The same thing applies to rule of law as pulling the gopher tails, you didn't destroy the gophers. We found another way and we did get rid of them. I want to say that we must look forward to a better approach to the rule of law, and in closing, I think I've got a few more minutes and I want to stay within the rules. You'll excuse me if I take a few minutes.

If we have a good program it will not only lower the death rate but we can look forward to a lower insurance rate in our province, providing we have people on the committee who have the work at heart. In 1965 we were in the Opposition and we gave the Government of the day wholehearted support. We are looking forward to that kind of support from the Opposition today, that we be prepared to listen and appraise this situation and come up with answers that society can accept, that we will tackle the problem as statesmen and not as politicians. Any person who tries to play politics on this motion makes me sick. We want a program that will benefit society. I hope the Members of this House will devote themselves very conscientiously to this program to make it a success. In this program

we are looking forward and we need the help, all the help we can get. The homes, the schools, the churches, Members of this House most of all, let us show the example that we have decided to do something about it.

With this, Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great pleasure to second this motion and thank you for listening.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. D.G. Steuart** (Leader of the Opposition): — Mr. Speaker, in speaking to this motion let me say right at the outset that highway safety has nothing to do with politics. We are all concerned, everyone in this House and I'm sure everyone in this province and in this nation is and should be concerned about highway accidents, the terrible death toll on the highways, the damage to life and limb and to property. The figures we've seen for the last year, the figures that were brought out by the Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) for this country and for the United States are shocking. In the Province of Saskatchewan, less than one million people, to think that we killed 274 people on our highways during one year is a terrible, terrible tragedy. Of course and immediately I want to say that we will work in any way we can with this committee, with the Government and with any other agency to try and slow down and bring to a halt the terrible escalation of traffic accidents.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Steuart:** — We followed the practice that has been suggested and brought forward in this motion, when we were the Government. It's been referred to a committee we set up for highway traffic and safety in 1966 and it was a good committee and they made a good report and we took action. I think as a result of, or a great deal as a result of the action that was taken and the findings of this committee, traffic fatalities in Saskatchewan showed a marked decline. In 1966 there were 219 traffic fatalities; 282 in 1967 to 292; they dropped in 1968 to 275, 269, 240; in 1970 to 207 and in 1971 at 214. Now they have started to climb back up again and in 1972 we had the highest and worst record in many years. So I think it is time that we do institute another study and take a look at this whole very serious problem in light of today's traffic problems, traffic patterns, highways, the size and the speed of cars, and also the conditions and the social conditions that exist today. We've changed many things in the last five or six years, we've changed the drinking laws, we changed our highways, people are driving larger, faster cars, and obviously, they are driving them at a more reckless rate.

Mr. Speaker, before we go into this committee, let's take a look at the whole situation. The Member from Lumsden (Mr. Lane) raised a point about what happened in 1972 and I'm sure we don't have an easy answer any more than the Government or anyone else has, but I am concerned and I have stated this before with this review committee. It was announced in 1972 and it did come into effect in late 1972 and I don't know whether it had any effect on traffic deaths, traffic accidents or not. I don't know whether the drivers changed their pattern but I have a feeling that maybe they did, that they knew and they were told fairly early in 1972 that consideration would be given to a review committee so that people who had their

licence taken away from them for drinking and driving, possibly could get some kind of limited licence. I don't know whether this had had any effect or not but I agree with the suggestion from the Member from Lumsden (Mr. Lane) that this shouldn't have happened. The Government shouldn't have instituted this change knowing, and I'm sure they did know, that they intended to bring forward this committee. And I suggest now that you freeze the work of that committee. You can say, I'm sorry but we are going to stop any review of drinking and driving and the returning of licences until we have had a report from this committee set up to study traffic accidents and traffic safety. It isn't going to hurt anything. If people are going to have to walk for another six, seven or eight months, well, then that's their problem because they knew the rules and they knew them very clearly before they drank.

Mr. Speaker, it's all very well to consider the driver and this is what we are doing more and more in society. When are we going to speak up for the ordinary law abiding citizen that just gets up and goes to work and does a day's work and pays taxes and he goes out at night and he doesn't get involved with the law? Today's society moves more and more to take a softer attitude to drunken drivers, to drinking drivers, to criminals. Well, I think it's time that we began to think of the victim. Every time I ever had somebody ask me for consideration when we put in the change that meant if you were caught drinking and driving you walked for six months at least. I think of two friends of mine who came out of a store on Central Avenue and 10th Street in Prince Albert a few years ago and were waiting for the bus and a drunken driver came around the corner and smashed into them. The woman was killed instantly and I used to go and visit the man, a friend of mine, in the hospital where he lay like a vegetable for two or three years before he died. And anytime anybody came to me and said, "Dave, I got caught, I was over .08 and I have to walk but I need my car," and who doesn't need their car, I remembered those people and I said, "Look, you knew the rules, nobody forced you to drink and nobody forced you behind the wheel of that car." I say the time is not to be softer to drinking drivers, it's to get tougher. Sure, educate the people, I don't disagree with you, but in the meantime, let's have a little thought and a little honest consideration for those people in our society who don't drink or who may drink but don't drive, the victims in our society.

Let's take a look at the liquor profits we just had tabled today. We are going to make \$30 million out of liquor this past year, \$30 million out of booze. We've changed the rules so that we can drink liquor in our beer parlours and I'm not opposed to that. But let's not kid ourselves, there has to be a connection and there is a connection. The fact that we have made it easier to get alcohol, we've lowered the age where people can drink, we've made the hours longer, we've made hard liquor more attainable in more outlets. At the same time, what's happened to the deaths on our highways? They've gone up sharply. Don't tell me there isn't a connection between highway deaths and increased drinking. And I'm told that the profits for spirits, for liquor, will be away up this year for all outlets, not just the Government. So I am saying to this House and I am saying to the Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) and the Government, I ask you to take another look at that Review Committee and put a stop to it until this highway traffic committee has had a chance to study and see if, in fact, this had any effect. And maybe they will come back and say we shall even have to get

tougher. If they come back and say like the Member for Kinistino (Mr. Thibault) suggested, this isn't the vital thing, this isn't the important thing, by all means, then relax the laws, but in the meantime, all we have done is inconvenience some people and we may have saved some lives.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise another point about this committee. And again, I want to say that we will support this committee and we will work with it as long as it's serious. But I have to raise some serious questions about the Government's sincerity in this whole matter. Why, if you are so concerned about traffic safety, have you cut \$5,000 from the grant given to the Saskatchewan Safety Council? And that's a fact. This year, 1973, now you may change that and I hope you do, and again, I ask you to reconsider. This is an organization in Saskatchewan that concerns itself with, among other things, safety on the highways. Maybe they should have been given more money. Certainly, they shouldn't have the money cut. When you made the transfer from the Workmen's Compensation to the Department of Labour, they have been cut \$5,000. Maybe they're going to get a new grant, maybe they are going to get more money, I hope they do, and again I urge you to reconsider. But we have trouble understanding your motives to get up here and say you are concerned and I am sure you are, as we all are, about safety on our highways and the terrible, shocking death toll and at the same time you have taken away \$5,000 and taken the feet out from under a group of volunteers in this province who have dedicated themselves, mostly on a voluntary basis, to doing something about accidents on our highways.

Then about the committees. There have been some committees that have been good. The committee that was set up to study the whole liquor question has been very active. I might argue about the necessity of some of the trips they have taken and some of the money spent but I understand they have a very comprehensive review that will be brought into this House to give Members on all sides a chance to let their feelings be known and I'm sure it won't be on party lines, then a decision will be made on that report. I understand it's a good report, a comprehensive report. But let's not kid ourselves. The report on social welfare, the report on small business, has been a disgrace. Those people didn't even go into their terms of reference. They ran all over the province. I am convinced they were more concerned with political cosmetics, political showmanship than they were with the real problems of small businessmen or the real problems of the welfare recipient. For God's sake, if you set this up, have some hearings, get to the bottom of the problem, do whatever you have to do, move heaven and earth if you have to, but come back into this House with something concrete as quickly as you can so that we can take action. I say this right now. The Member for Lumsden (Mr. Lane) said he would question our position on these committees. We are getting sick and tired of being dummies and stooges for the Government's political window dressing around this province with the people who are suffering on welfare and the people in our small businesses who badly need help. Let's not play politics with this because if you do, I give you fair warning, we will withdraw from such a committee, in fact, from all committees.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear, we are not going to be bamboozled by the Government when they wave this death toll that has happened during their term of office, and it's shocking, and I don't blame them. But I do blame them for playing

politics with our highways as the Member for Lumsden pointed out, I do blame them for cutting \$5,000, when they are handing out money like drunken sailors, from a group of people who have dedicated themselves to highway traffic safety, and I do blame them for setting an example with these other committees that's a bad and a poor example, and I say to them, in spite of the fact that this is one of the most serious problems we face as a Legislative Assembly, we are going to demand on behalf of the public, that when you set this committee up, we will be proud and honored to be on it. Let that committee do a job. Let that committee not play politics as you have done in other committees. And let it bring a report in here that we can all support. On that basis we will give your wholehearted support to this committee.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. E.C. Whelan** (Regina North West): — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the motion by the Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) and pleased to be associated with the Hon. Member from Melfort-Kinistino (Mr. Thibault) who has spoken persistently and effectively on this kind of resolution year in and year out.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Whelan:** — If some of those who died on our highways last year could have been spared by legislative action then we should not hesitate to adopt this motion. This motion, Mr. Speaker, instructs us to consult the people of this province, consider their suggestions and make recommendations. A similar committee reported to this Legislature in December 1966.

One recommendation, as has been pointed out, Mr. Speaker, and probably the most important recommendation, was that a permanent committee on traffic safety be set up. I regret that recommendation was ignored. Perhaps the statistics for 1972, statistics that show that more than four times the number of Members in this Assembly died in Saskatchewan this year on public roads and streets should be stressed. Perhaps this will guarantee that we will have a permanent committee. The injured and their anguish have not been measured but I am sure this would be shocking to all of us if it could be measured.

Why a committee? Well, Mr. Speaker, I have heard some criticism based on political bias. I have worked on a number of committees including the other highway traffic and safety committee and I say to these critics: How else do you become democratically knowledgeable? How else do you get suggestions from the people? How else do you study objectively without being hampered by political prejudice?

Mr. Speaker, what should the committee study? I suggest the study should take place under three, wide, general headings. First, education regarding all aspects of traffic and safety. Second, engineering of roads, safety equipment and the vehicle. Third, the enforcement of the rules of safety. Mr. Speaker, allow me in capsule form to enlarge on each of these headings.

First, education. The use of breath testing equipment to teach the public by demonstration the danger of driving while impaired, perhaps by a subsidy, making it mandatory that

such equipment be on hand in certain liquor establishments might be valuable. Let the committee decide. We should learn from an early age, in schools and during pre-driver training, and at perhaps regular five-year intervals when the driver is tested, the need for observing traffic safety habits. This the committee should consider. How and when these instructions should be given, let the committee tell us. To sum up, Mr. Speaker, the study by the committee regarding education should include the use of alcohol, the operation of the vehicle, concern for the safety of others.

Let us turn to the engineering study. Can we improve the accident rate caused by bad intersections, narrow bridges, confusing signs, automobiles with manufacturing defects? Let me make one specific suggestion. Seat belts are in many instances a jungle of straps caught in the cushions of the seat. A design that could strap the driver quickly in the harness would encourage their use. Perhaps we should look at enforcement. This is an area where reason rather than punishment has to be examined. Better to hold a driver seminar, I suggest, emphasizing safety, than as a penalty to fine a driver \$25. In Illinois, as the Hon. Member for Melfort Kinistino has pointed out, drivers found guilty of traffic violations are in some cases sentenced to take a two-hour instruction class with films and slides stressing traffic safety. Maybe this approach is better. Let them examine this aspect.

Experience has taught us that .08 and its penalties stops the social drinker but .04 or any reading or even the lack of a licence does not deter a person who is alcohol dependent. The record will show that some citizens drive without a licence even after their licence has been suspended and in many instances have caused serious accidents. This has become a very great and very serious problem. Enforcement is an area where the approach may have to be re-examined with the penalty redesigned to inform, to advise, to reason, rather than to anger. I suggest that the committee re-examine the enforcement approach.

Other areas to consider for the proposed committee are uniformity of traffic lights and city bylaws, a compulsory check of the vehicle and the driver. Driver training for the beginner may be found necessary on a compulsory basis.

Mr. Speaker, there are new fields we should examine as well. The use and operation of snowmobiles, the operation of farm tractors, on and off the highways, the hours a professional driver should be allowed to drive without a rest, cab drivers, truck drivers and others.

Mr. Speaker, there is a need for research. For example, we should know the record of performance of automobile tires, the value of pneumatic bumpers, the need for roll bars on a vehicle, the reason brakes have given out without warning.

I would hope the committee would recommend co-ordination of services in our Government that could make a contribution to safety. To name some of the areas where co-ordination could take place — the Highway Traffic Board, Saskatchewan Government Insurance Office, the Department of Public Health, the Motor Licensing Branch, the Department of Highways Engineering Branch, the traffic court officials, the enforcement officers. Study is relevant and necessary to save lives, I repeat, particularly in the area of education, engineering and enforcement.

How extensive should the report of the committee be? The motion is all-embracing and calls for full, complete and careful investigation. I think the committee should study records regarding the scene of death on the highway, the time of day, whether alcohol played any part in the accident, the type of highway, study eye-witness accounts if they are available, review the make and model of the car, the condition of the highway, the mechanical condition of the vehicle, brakes, tires, steering and lights, safety equipment, if the person at the wheel has been given a driver examination and when, his medical history if any, and so forth.

Mr. Speaker, these patterns, if carefully examined, will indicate poor highway construction, mechanical failure to the automobile, and medical or other reasons that may have contributed to the accident. This information should be available if an extensive and careful program for safety is to be recommended.

The last committee, for some reason or other, neglected to call before it the manufacturers of automobiles. Mr. Speaker, every day we read in the newspaper of accidents that were caused by a design defect, a stone jammed in the steering apparatus, a spring suspension that causes a car to tip over, a brake system that is faulty. Hundreds of thousands of cars are recalled and yet the last committee failed, Mr. Speaker, to call before it the designers and mechanical engineers who build automobiles and those who have examined from a critical point of view the defective mechanical construction of these vehicles. Mr. Speaker, perhaps faults we failed to investigate might have been drawn to the attention of the manufacturers, had we interviewed them, an omission I hope the proposed committee will not repeat.

The Federal Government controls much of the legislation, particularly under the Criminal Code, which governs the use of breath-testing equipment. Mr. Speaker, the last committee neglected to bring before it and consult the people at Ottawa regarding the use of breath-testing equipment, or the federal legislation which was about to be included in the Criminal Code. Since our legislation dovetails and works hand-in-glove with the federal legislation, it would seem only realistic to consult with the federal administration and Federal Members of the Parliamentary Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs who have in the past studied many aspects of automobiles and traffic safety.

Mr. Speaker, criticism sometimes levelled at committee work is that recommendations have been dictated by Cabinet or, when they came down, they were ignored. A quick review of the report of the Highway Traffic and Safety Committee, December 1966 will certainly indicate Cabinet Ministers of that day were not conscience stricken in respect to some of the recommendations, and on some of them they did not act. Sure, they acted on some of the recommendations and I was pleased to see that they did. However, at the present time we are considering snowmobile legislation. In 1966 the recommendations of that committee on page 31 of that report stated and I quote:

That a study be made of the desirability of licensing or not licensing snowmobiles for operation on the highway.

Had that study been made some of the questions that are being asked, some of the points that are being raised by the public,

February 7, 1973

by the enforcement officers, by the snowmobile operators, by snowmobile dealers might have been answered several years ago.

Another recommendation was brought to my attention by the parents of an accident victim last year, when someone at the wheel of a truck who was fast asleep caused the death of a member of their family. Mr. Speaker, this recommendation appears on page 25 and it reads as follows:

The number of hours a commercial driver may operate a vehicle be regulated.

The need to more than encourage this recommendation as has been the practice was clearly demonstrated in this particular accident. A recommendation as important as this, as pertinent to the safety not only of the driver, but the public at large, as reasonable and necessary to prevent accidents, was recommended unanimously by the last committee.

Another recommendation that is typical, on page 22 of the last report:

That an investigation be conducted into the possibility of implementing driver improvement clinics for traffic violators.

As has been explained in the Chicago arrangement and again in the Province of Alberta, this is the method used to alter the attitude of a persistent violator by some jurisdictions here in Canada. A driver improvement clinic has become part of the sentence imposed by the court or as a condition of obtaining a further licence. The committee felt that encouraging results had been shown. More recently we saw the results in the City of Chicago. It was recommended in the Province of Saskatchewan in 1966 and yet nothing was done.

In the City of Regina, if you drive during the winter months, you wonder about the safety of pedestrians and drivers. Yet one finds in 1966 the Safety Committee on page 20 stated that:

Research be made into better methods of combating winter road conditions, and in particular, conditions in urban areas.

To my knowledge, Mr. Speaker, this research has not been undertaken. If one looks at the streets in the City of Regina, they are hazardous, they test the driving skill of anyone at the wheel of a vehicle.

One sometimes wonders about drivers. Our committee in 1966 discovered that there were drivers at the wheel of a car who because of their eyesight or some other condition were not qualified. In some cases they had caused an accident resulting in death to themselves or others. It was suggested in 1966 that the present system of checking drivers was inadequate. The committee recommended that regular physical examinations of certain drivers be mandatory, more specific direction was given in the recommendation, but I will not go into detail, only to say that to my knowledge the recommendation has not been invoked as stated on page 18 of that committee report. I quote:

Every licensed driver be required to pass a driver



examination every five years.

Another specific recommendation was made by the committee ignored not completely, but certainly not adequately followed up:

That a vehicle safety program be instituted whereby vehicles would be made subject to periodic tests.

In the City of Vancouver, for instance, such a test is mandatory. It was suggested that encouragement be given at least in the larger urban areas to develop a system similar to Vancouver's testing stations. There was at that time in 1966 great concern about the specific cause of accidents. The committee made careful recommendations in this area and they appear on page 12:

The Highway Traffic Board or some other appropriate agency of government establish a traffic accident research division and, further, that the Government establish grants and bursaries for accident prevention and safety research.

Mr. Speaker, the reasons for these recommendations are obvious, the arguments are set out in careful detail with the recommendations. To my knowledge nothing has been done to establish the research bureau or to vote money for the grants and bursaries designed for accident prevention and safety research.

Mr. Speaker, if a committee is established in this instance, I say to Members of the Legislature, I do not think that it will cut traffic deaths, and will not decrease traffic accidents no matter how good the recommendations of the committee are, unless the recommendations are accurate, unless there is considerable and careful research before they are set out and, finally, unless the officers of this Legislature charged with the responsibility of carrying out the recommendations put these recommendations into law.

Let me conclude by saying that the first recommendation of last committee was easily the most important and was, as record will show, completely ignored. That recommendation, Mr. Speaker, as it appears on page 10 states:

That a Standing Committee of the Legislature be initiated to continue the study of traffic problems.

The explanation for this is in one sentence and it is as follows:

It is the opinion of the committee that a continuing review of traffic safety is necessary to insure progress in this area.

Mr. Speaker, the question I put to this Legislature is: If there had been a continuing committee, if there had been proper research, if there had been grants and bursaries for accident prevention study, if vehicles and drivers had been subjected to periodic tests as had been recommended, if there had been research into methods of controlling road conditions in winter months in urban areas, if traffic improvement clinics for traffic violators had been established, would there have been a reduction in the number of traffic deaths in Saskatchewan? The answer, of

course, Mr. Speaker, is that we don't know. But it is a good question to raise. Under the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, we are setting records for deaths, for injuries, for costs of accidents and days lost and vehicle repairs. Surely, Mr. Speaker, this time when we set up a committee we can at least expect that unlike the last one we had, which was made up from Members of this House, that the suggestions of the committee will be considered seriously and that there will be improvements in highway traffic and safety. The record is bad, the record in following some of the basic recommendations of the last committee is bad, the record of deaths on our highways is bad. I say the record is so bad that we must in all conscience study carefully every aspect of this problem, make recommendations and, at the same time, as legislators place our faith in the committee to such a degree that we shall be prepared, as Members of the Assembly, to implement the recommendations in the best interests of traffic safety, I say, in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan.

New fields requiring study confront us, mobilizing departments and branches to help and co-ordinate our efforts will be part of the committee's activity, but the ultimate success will depend on participation by the public in the form of suggestions and ideas and commitment to good safety practices. One life saved will repay us for our efforts. Let us take up the challenge presented by this resolution, Mr. Speaker. The need has been spelled out, there is no reason to hesitate, I will support the motion.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. W.A. Robbins** (Saskatoon Nutana Centre): — Mr. Speaker, the presentation of a motion on highway safety and the proposition to establish an intersessional committee to study all aspects of this problem and thus hopefully effect some solutions, merits the support of every single Member of this Assembly. The problem is with us and the formation of a committee to study all aspects of highway traffic and safety may be reasonably expected to acquire the basic facts related to the increasing carnage on our highways.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has sufficient problems related to population retention irrespective of the political persuasion of its Government, without wiping out increasing numbers of persons in highway accidents. Moreover the statistics reveal that there is an increasing proportion of young people who suffer loss of life in this manner. That, Mr. Speaker, only compounds the tragedy.

People who are charged with responsibility related to law enforcement and highway safety; people who work in hospitals and related health services; people who work in the insurance industry, yes, Mr. Speaker, people in our province generally have been in receipt of some pretty clear cut evidence that the major problem related to highway accidents and safety is related to the use of alcohol. Mr. Speaker, we need not be surprised by this fact. The highway system in Saskatchewan has been vastly improved since the end of World War II. I speak from experience, Mr. Speaker, I have over the last 30 years addressed 661 public meetings, mostly credit union, pension and co-operative meetings in this province and I have travelled in excess of two-thirds of a million miles by automobile, most of it on Saskatchewan

highways. No Saskatchewan resident, unless he is completely blinded by political prejudice, and therefore in the category of those persons who substitute fiction for fact, could come by any other conclusion other than that the general condition and capability of the highway system to carry an increasing density of high speed traffic, has been vastly improved. This improvement occurred under the CCF administration from 1944 to 1964 and under Liberal administration from 1964 to 1971 and will, Mr. Speaker, continue to occur under the present administration. In that same period of time, automobiles and trucks which populate the highway system have been improved in relation to safety features built into them. Far from perfect, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a fact that cannot be denied even when one takes into consideration the rather exaggerated claims of the Madison Avenue advertisers who prepare the safety ads for the automobile producers.

Mr. Speaker, over the same period of time the educational system of our province has provided many driver training programs to assist young persons to acquire adequate and safe driving skills in order to achieve eligibility for attainment of their drivers' licences. Safety campaigns, Mr. Speaker, during the same period have been conducted on a continuous basis to constantly remind drivers of motor vehicles of the benefits of safe driving habits and to stress the potential dangers involved in failing to exercise due care and attention when operating a vehicle. All of these factors, Mr. Speaker, despite increased vehicle density and increased use of the motor vehicle as a means of transportation of people and goods should result in a reduced incidence of motor mishaps. Yet, Mr. Speaker, the reverse situation holds true. Even if this situation did not hold true, Mr. Speaker, we should be deeply concerned by the death and disability reports which dot the news headlines and which are reported with never-ending consistency in the news media. When improved highways, not perfect, obviously, more efficient vehicles and they can be improved still further, better training for new and experienced operators of motor vehicles, and well thought out and continuous safety campaigns fail, Mr. Speaker, to result in a declining total of death and disability statistics and a reduction in the economic losses incurred in property damage through highway accidents, we should be able to pinpoint the reasons for the accident toll in life and property and correct them. I believe the major culprit in this deteriorating situation is related to the increasing use of alcohol.

The social drinker is the unknown factor in this question. The inebriated person in charge of a motor vehicle can be fairly readily detected. The social drinker cannot. Mr. Speaker, alcohol takes the cake as the gay deceiver. Because alcohol is a depressant, even limited quantities in the blood stream convince the involved person that he can drive much more efficiently than he could prior to consuming the alcohol. When the factual data related to his condition is that his reflexes have slowed and his capability of coping with an unforeseen eventuality is appreciably reduced. In addition, Mr. Speaker, I am told he feels like a new man and naturally enough a new man has to have a drink. It is therefore a cumulative process involvement which confronts the social drinker who almost inevitably becomes the drinking driver who must necessarily wend his way home when the party is over.

Mr. Speaker, I do not say this in any narrow biased sense

of the word. I have attended many functions and have seen people leave those functions when they were not capable of handling a motor vehicle. I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that I have driven many hundreds of thousands of miles on the roads of this province. I have been involved in two accidents. You may say perhaps, I was unfortunate, but in both instances it involved a drinking driver. I want to assure you in neither case was I in that category. Mr. Speaker, I am not arguing in a moralistic vein with respect to this problem. People who use alcohol moderately and some who use it immoderately will in their own more sober moments readily admit that the use of alcohol confronts society with severe problems in relation to highway accidents and safety. In the establishment of an intersessional committee we are, I believe, zeroing in on the problem as it relates to the use of alcohol and the resultant highway accidents. The breathalyzer machine when it was first introduced in Great Britain appreciably reduced the incidence of motor mishaps. Similar results, Mr. Speaker, were attained in other countries and in various provinces in this country when similar requirements were introduced into law in these jurisdictions. However, the improvement in reduction of automobile accidents was, generally speaking, rather short lived. The accident trend is upward again. Mr. Speaker, we are not alone in this regard. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, alcohol is not the only ingredient in the mix of causes of highway accidents. Increasingly, however, law enforcement officials in numerous jurisdictions point to its use as the major cause of crashes and casualties. A reduction in the amount of permissible alcohol in the bloodstream from .08 as a classification of impairment would appear logical as a means of diminishing the risks of accident from this cause. Mr. Speaker, defective vehicles, nervous tension, physical exhaustion, road conditions and even the driver's state of mind are factors in highway accidents. But they are conditions in which good maintenance and reasoned disciplines may readily reduce accident incidence. I suppose one could argue, Mr. Speaker, that reasoned discipline in the use of alcohol would similarly reduce accidents. However, the nature of this drug — one should remember that it is a depressant — militates against that reasoned discipline. Therefore, more stringent rules appear necessary. A diminished permissible blood alcohol content as a classification of impairment and automatically, at least to some degree, reduce the probability of accidents.

Mr. Speaker, I have broad agreement with the Hon. Member for Melfort-Kinistino (Mr. Thibault) in relation to improving the general public's respect for law and order. Therefore it is essential that the problems are clearly pinpointed and action then taken as required. Generally, people will support that which they conceive to be reasonable. If people do not respect the law the problems simply multiply.

Mr. Speaker, I might digress here for one moment to illustrate what I am getting at by relating an incident of a few years ago, when I attended a court sitting in the City of Saskatoon, where people were coming before that court for traffic violations. It struck me as rather odd that a person who was charged with turning a corner, striking the rear of an automobile, breaking the tail light and causing some minor damage to the vehicle, was fined \$25 and costs for being involved in that accident. The individual concerned pleaded guilty and made this remark: He said, "Your Honour, I would like to inform you that I have been driving an automobile for 38 years and this is the first time I have been involved in an

accident.” He admitted that he was responsible and he said it a matter of temporary negligence. The fine was \$25 and costs.

The next person before that court was an individual who had passed a police car at 60 miles per hour on a city street, on the wrong side and it was an unmarked street. The judge, the person in charge of that court, questioned this fellow quite severely in relation to his actions and made the remark, “What is your occupation?” And the fellow said that he was a taxi driver. He wanted to see his driver’s licence. At that time apparently we measured violations of traffic rules in relation to people driving their automobiles by awarding points. I am not sure of the exact figure here, but I believe this fellow had used up all the points. In other words, he would lose his licence if they allotted any further points at this particular time. The judge looked at it. He made this remark. He said, “Well, I can’t really take your licence away from you. After all, you are dependent on this for your livelihood. You do drive a taxi.” And then he concluded his remarks with a fine of \$25 and costs. Exactly the same as the man who had one accident in 38 years and had simply turned a corner with a measure of temporary negligence.

I happened to be going out of that court at the same time as this gentleman and he was really angry. In fact, I think if he went out and drove his car at that particular time he was endangering himself and the public because of his anger. Nevertheless, I did have the feeling that court did not deal very reasonably in terms of those two particular cases.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make it crystal clear that I do not judge alcohol as the only culprit in highway accident rates. However, Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, I believe it is the major one and I would hope the Members who accept the responsibility of sitting on this very necessary and very important committee will turn their minds seriously to coping with the increasing severity of this problem.

Because I am one who thinks the alcohol problem cannot, in fact, be avoided when a factual analysis of highway accidents is undertaken, I sincerely commend support of the resolution to establish an intersessional committee consisting of nine Members of this Assembly. It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that it will receive unanimous support of all Members here.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Hon. N.E. Byers** (Minister of the Environment): — Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion to establish a committee to study traffic and safety in Saskatchewan.

Once again, this Government is demonstrating its concern for people by taking this new approach to a very serious problem.

I want to consider, first, Mr. Speaker, the economic cost of traffic accidents in Saskatchewan. The shocking accident statistics for 1972 reveal a total of 19,699 reported accidents. These resulted in property damage amounting to \$15,602,156. It is recognized that this figure is a compilation of insurance statistics and is by no means the total economic cost. It does

not include the deductibles not covered by insurance nor the large number of unreported accidents. Expert investigations suggest that these run from 30 to 70 per cent. It does not include the cost of personal injuries and loss of life in an economic sense only, not including social costs. It does not include the cost of police work attributable to traffic accidents. It does not include the cost of medical, dental and other personal expenses or insurance overhead.

These six extra items must be added to property damage in order to arrive at the total economic cost of traffic accidents. Adopting the research methods and data used in a University of Saskatchewan study of January 1972 and adding the extras to the bill for property damage, the total economic cost of traffic accidents in Saskatchewan comes to an astronomical figure of \$41,800,000 in the last calendar year.

This, the economic cost, does not attempt to put a price tag on the human suffering, misery and broken homes, hopeless cripples that have resulted from the carnage on our highways. The Saskatchewan Safety Council reports that there was a 28 per cent increase in highway fatalities during 1972. 274 lives were lost, 274 breadwinners, parents and children, 274 people who were contributing to society.

Now let us examine the nature of the accidents problems. There is a common tendency to place literally all the blame for accidents on driver negligence. There is some truth in the cliché that 'the nut that holds the wheel is responsible for most accidents'. At the same time this is a dangerous oversimplification. Searching for accident causes, in the usual sense, may be a non-productive approach. For example, it is often said that the driver lost control. His loss of control may be the result of a chain of circumstances. Hypothetically a single car off-the-road accident may be the result of one or a combination of nine factors related to the driver, the car, and/or the road. The driver may be suffering fatigue, distracted by a passenger or a car ahead. The steering may have been out of adjustment. Tires may have been too smooth for effective braking. The pavement may have been wet causing a skid into a ditch, against an approach road that should have been in another location.

The point that I have illustrated here is that the factors contributing to accidents must be analyzed if accidents are to be reduced. Oversimplification of causes must be eliminated. There are many facets of the problems that should be studied by the committee. For example, research, co-ordination and public information are three that quickly come to mind.

On research, it is estimated that there is only the equivalent of one and a half persons working on traffic safety research in Regina, Saskatoon and the Department of Highways, a meagre research effort for such an important problem. Research carried out at the national level deals only with the automotive safety aspects of the province. It is a provincial responsibility to research the efficacy of traffic laws on pavement surfaces, contour of ditches, ice control, improvement of approach roads, location of pole lines and detailed study of accident prone locations. A traffic safety research agency should be established

Public education — The importance of educating the public

to the importance of traffic safety can not be overestimated. The case for safety should be taken to the public on a concerted basis. Yet, as of now, no Government department is making any significant effort in this regard. Indeed, the apparent apathy of the public can only retard progress in objective programs for safety. So the public must be aroused.

In general, danger situations are frequently not recognized by people. Even when there is recognition people may not relate to it because they do not believe an accident will happen to them. Another reason may be that there is no positive utility to a driver resulting from safe conditions. A safe road doesn't tend to produce anything that the driver can relate to and so he doesn't tend to concern himself with it. One example of the seeming indifference of the public toward accident prevention is illustrated by the attitudes towards the use of seat belts. In survey conducted in Saskatchewan last summer, out of 50,000 drivers, only slightly more than five per cent were wearing seat belts. Several research studies have shown fatalities and serious injuries can be cut in half if seat belts are worn. In one such study in which 278 accidents where people were reported as wearing seat belts, there were only four fatalities, a rate of one to seventy. Of 2,509 people not wearing belts there were 71 fatalities, a ratio of one to thirty-five. This means that there could have been a saving of 100 lives in Saskatchewan in one year if seat belts had been consistently worn by everyone. And yet, conventional wisdom says that seat belts are more of a hindrance than a help and make no appreciable difference in the number of injuries and fatalities. The public must be persuaded that attitude is a very dangerous one.

One other area that warrants public attention concerns where the accidents are occurring. Most people have the impression that the majority of accidents occur on the major highways. However, in an accident analysis study carried out in the province in 1971, the number of accidents on provincial highways totalled 4,039 whereas the number of accidents that took place on local and urban roads totalled 14,172. This means that more than three times the number of accidents occurred in towns and cities than on the provincial highways.

More assistance should therefore be given to local governments to do research on accident prone locations, to evaluate study information and to increase public awareness in safety matters. Much can be done to improve the education of the public in this respect.

There is probably general agreement among traffic safety groups that the media, especially television with its visual approach, should play an increasing role. Safety courses should be on the curriculum in our schools. One thing certain, the legislative committee would be in a position to do an in depth study on driver safety education and bring recommendations forward to this Legislature.

On Co-ordination — As we all know there are a number of agencies involved in accident prevention and control. Such groups as the police, insurance companies, the Department of Highways, urban and municipal governments all have a common purpose in serving the public. Yet there is such a dispersion of responsibility among the various troops that any concerted accident prevention study falls by the wayside. This lack of co-ordination presents many problems.

1. No adequate means of specifically identifying accident locations on provincial highways. Even mileposts have been recommended for a long time
2. As I have already pointed out, the need to provide comprehensive co-ordinated information to municipal authorities. This is not being done effectively.
3. There is rarely an engineering investigation of accidents to determine if an engineering change could have prevented an accident.
4. Present accident report forms are sadly inadequate in providing information necessary for an engineering analysis.
5. Studies are done, recommendations are presented, yet little is done to implement the recommendations.

It seems that what is needed here is some kind of permanent agency, a strong centralized unit to co-ordinate the efforts of these various groups. Such an agency would be responsible for co-ordinating research data contributed by such bodies as the Federal Minister of Transport, agencies of other provinces and, perhaps, the United States National Safety Administration. Much completed research would not then be duplicated and ignored. The agency could also evaluate the relative benefits of various safety programs.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I hope that I have impressed upon you and the members of this House the magnitude of the problem facing us. In pointing out the need for a new approach to traffic safety I do not intend to belittle, in any way, the excellent efforts of individuals and groups who have been directing their attention to the safety problems. Much of their work has been and is invaluable in pointing us in the right direction. However, these people do need help in matters of research, co-ordination and public information. It is the intention of the Government to give them that help by asking you to support this motion to establish an intersessional committee on traffic safety.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. P.P. Mostoway** (Hanley): — Mr. Speaker, to be able to speak in support of this motion give me much pleasure.

I say this because it pertains to an area of concern to almost every person in this province. Again, I say with pleasure, because I know that it is just another way of capitalizing on the vast knowledge, which I know the people of this province have, in regard to traffic accidents, safety and driving in general. In other words, Mr. Speaker, I think committees such as this one proposed, can, by going out to the people, be able to get ideas that very often the experts overlook. Who knows the hazards of traffic better than the people who use the roads? Who would not admit that often it is the individual, whom we sometimes tend to ignore, who can sometimes come up with something that often escapes many others. And that thing is called common sense. Common sense that often escapes those not acquainted with conditions peculiar to a particular geographical area or set of conditions.



Mr. Speaker, last year saw a high death toll on our highways, 274 to be exact, a 24 per cent jump as compared to the before, 1971. Now I think that it must be pointed out that this trend toward rising fatalities and injuries is a national or even an international trend. Now one explanation given me for this increase in essence says, when there is an upswing in the economy, a recovery from a slump, the accident rate increases. Now with this in mind, I can well understand why the accident rate is now higher than it was a few years ago. There may be some who would want to blame our young people for the increase in accidents, and I stress the word "increase". There appears, in talking to some of the so-called experts, there appears to be no evidence to support this. The increase appears to come from all age groups. So let us put the blame here it really belongs, on all of us. Let's not use our young people as whipping boys for something we all have to share the blame for.

Mr. Speaker, I presume that Members of this committee on highway safety will look into the function of all provincial bodies concerned with safety. However, I should like to, at this time, suggest that a good look be taken at the limitations now hindering the work of the Saskatchewan Safety Council. I would be the last person to criticize the people who have served or are now serving on this Council. They have and are doing a reasonably good job considering the limitations on which I will now elaborate.

It is my hope that this Council can somehow continue to function but in a much more independent manner than in the past. More independent to the extent that in future, Council members may feel more free to experiment with new and more colorful ways to catch public attention. I should think that more opportunity could be provided this Council in regard to finding out what other areas of the continent are doing about safety. And also to look into the area of more experimentation.

Now in order to do this, there must be more financial assistance given to the Council so that it can do a better job. And tied in with this should be some sort of restructuring so that there will be no reluctance on the part of the Council to criticize government when government is not doing its share or taking the initiative in the promotion of safety. Mr. Speaker, do not misinterpret my remarks as implying that this or any government has not been concerned in this area. Nor are my remarks meant to offer anything but praise for what the Safety Council has done in the past. Rather, my remarks are to be taken as a desire for improvement with stress on raising the safety level.

It is my hope also that the proposed committee take a good look at the Highway Traffic Board which enforces government regulations re highway safety. I realize that this government body is primarily an enforcer, but it seems to me that with all the facts and figures which it has at its command, it might be desirable for it to become more an initiator of action upon which the government could act.

Mr. Speaker, I think there is a greater contribution to be made to highway safety by municipal governments and also the Canadian Transport Commission. I am referring right now to uncontrolled railroad crossings, the hundreds and hundreds

that we have in Saskatchewan. It seems to me that there are many of these uncontrolled crossings which are real hazards to our people. They exist for no reason other than certain jurisdictions are unwilling to pay the portion of costs involved. Coming from a constituency that is mainly rural with many such crossings, I know of a number of such crossings that sooner or later will witness an accident and death. I hope this committee will come up with a recommendation that will force these crossings to become controlled. For this it will have to prod our railways and municipalities and the CTC (Canadian Transport Commission). It would appear to me that under the present set up, the burden of having something done or rather starting the ball rolling rests with the municipality, and when something is done, the costs are very high for installation and maintenance. In fact, so high that municipalities naturally shy away from action. Why shouldn't these costs be borne completely by the Canadian Transport Commission and the railways? At least, I think they should be.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, I favor the establishment of this committee. I hope when it goes out to listen to people that it considers a number of points. I should hope that it considers stringent testing of vehicles for road worthiness. Mr. Speaker, we don't allow defective articles in our schools, not very often, or in our places of employment. Again, I'll qualify that by saying not very often, nor do we allow defective articles in this House, articles such as chairs. Why should we allow defective vehicles on our roads? Regardless of how good the drivers are these vehicles are potential killers.

Mr. Speaker, let's hope that this committee will take a long and thorough look at driver education in our schools. It's my feeling that such instruction should be a regular part of the instruction given, and I realize it is in some schools, during school hours and not after school on a hit and miss basis as is often the case now in many of our schools. Let's heed the advice of the Saskatchewan Association of Home and Schools and get busy with this.

Mr. Speaker, I have touched on some points that I think might be pertinent to highway safety. I should now like to talk briefly on another matter and this is the matter of adult attitudes which are the same attitudes that eventually we pass on to our children. I refer specifically to smart-aleck or undesirable adult attitudes that entice young people to break numerous traffic laws and even laugh about it if the police can be made to look silly. How many of us here have not heard about somebody bragging about how he outwitted the police in speeding? And how many of us here haven't heard of someone brag about how he told off the police when he was caught? And how many of us here haven't seen a youngster's attitude forming toward this whole question when this bragging took place? I venture to say that we have all seen this happen. Mr. Speaker, I urge all who would do this to remould their own attitudes and to teach their young respect for the policeman, his position and for the laws and regulations, traffic and otherwise, of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Mostoway:** — Oh, I know there's no glamour in this but it will make this province a safer place in which to live and drive and it

will cause less heartache in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I will support this motion for the promotion of highway safety for the people of this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. D.L. Faris** (Arm River): — Mr. Speaker, in attempting to reduce the terrible toll of lives that are lost in highway accidents, it appears to me at there are two types of measures which can be taken. The first type of measure is that which can help prevent injury or death after an accident has occurred. There is certainly a great deal that can be done in this regard particularly in making automobiles safer. I understand that it might cost only some \$20 to install shock absorbing bumpers on an automobile. These shock absorbers would be similar to those on aircraft landing gear. The lives, the injuries, the costs which would be saved by such a simple feature are quite significant. Another measure which might well save some lives is a law which would make the wearing of a seat belt compulsory. They have indeed done this in some other parts of the world. Most of us, including myself, simply have a habit of not wearing our seat belts. If the law required us to wear seat belts we would soon get the seat belt habit.

I want to stress that these proposals would not prevent accidents, they would merely reduce the damage when an accident occurred. The second type of measure, probably the more important one, is that which prevents injury or death or damage by preventing the accident from occurring. In regard to preventing accidents from occurring, I think there is one measure that stands out above all others. And that is that intoxicated people must be prevented from driving. People have a right to drink and people have a right to drive, but I don't believe that anyone has the right to drink and then in an intoxicated state get into an automobile and drive it. In my opinion, the .08 legislation is not strict enough. There is very clear evidence that persons are impaired at around .04 or .05. Both the World Health Organization and the British Medical Association advocate a .05 level. The level of .05 is already enforced in Norway and Sweden and Iceland and Yugoslavia.

The most thorough study of the effects of drinking and driving that I know of is the Rapid City Report of 1964. This report indicated that a person with a blood alcohol level of .05 was no more likely to cause an accident than a person who had not been drinking. However, by the time the blood alcohol level reach .08 this study indicated that there was already four times the possibility of causing an accident. By the time blood alcohol reaches .06 which is the average level at which convictions are made in Saskatchewan, the likelihood of causing an accident is 35 times that of a sober man. It's no wonder that surveys around the world reveal that some 50 to 65 per cent of our traffic fatalities involve alcohol. That means, for instance, in Saskatchewan that well over 130 of those people who died on our highways last year could be attributed to drinking and driving.

Now I've advocated here a level of .05. We have to ask whether this is a reasonable level and by reasonable I mean a level that reasonably could be enforced. There is no question about it, one of the problems in relationship to this kind of

law is whether there is enough public acceptance that the law can be enforced. I think that we should then answer this question. If the blood alcohol level were reduced to .05, how many drinks could a person take in one hour before reaching that level? Is it a reasonable sort of level? Well, the answer is that a 150 to 175 pound man, an average sized man, could take two one and a half ounce drinks of whiskey or two bottles of beer or two three ounce glasses of wine in one hour and still be able to drive, still not be impaired. That appears to me to be a reasonable kind of level and a reasonable kind of law to be enforced. People who are not driving, of course, have the right in our society to consume more liquor than that. The problem is that first of all we must obtain public support for stricter laws and I think that has to be done through a massive public education program.

I suggest that this has to be done on a national basis. I think it has to be done on a national basis because if we are going to introduce stricter laws, they too, must be brought in on a national basis. We can't have .05 legislation in Saskatchewan if we have .08 in the rest of Canada. That's simply impractical. Therefore, we must gain some sort of federal co-operation.

I want to say that I was somewhat concerned by the attacks that were made upon the Review Committee and upon the position taken by the Attorney General in regard to the Review Committee because they don't seem to acknowledge the fact that we, in fact, don't have co-ordination between provincial and federal legislation in regard to .08 legislation. This kind of law must be brought into some sort of consistency right across the country and if we want to return to the position prior to July 15 we must talk to the federal Minister of Justice, Mr. Lang, as well as to the Attorney General.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Faris:** — I believe that public support can be gained for stricter legislation but I hope that this committee can really work in a non-political kind of atmosphere. I am very concerned about the kind of debate that has gone on today because I feel that our liquor committee did indeed carry out its deliberations in a non-political way. There were tremendous differences of opinion within the committee. I think that in several weeks when that report is tabled, some of these differences of opinion will come out. I am also convinced that most of those differences of opinions were simply on a personal basis as a difference of opinion and not of political stripe. I think it bodes ill for this committee if this kind of political attack and atmosphere is going to be established at the very beginning and I hope that it won't continue.

Mr. Speaker, I intend to support the establishment of this committee.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. T.M. Weatherald** (Cannington): — I'm not used to such popularity, Mr. Speaker. I want to make a few brief remarks on this motion because I do think it's an important one and I am sure that everyone in Saskatchewan who has had one of their family or one of their close relatives

involved in accidents are very concerned, and many other families are, and I think everyone is, in fact. I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I am a little bit surprised at so much self-virtue this afternoon because it seems to me that when the previous administration was attempting to do something about traffic deaths in Saskatchewan we received some pretty severe harpooning from some of these very same people who are speaking today when we built some four-lane highways, particularly the one Moose Jaw which undoubtedly and unquestionably has reduced traffic deaths within our province. And I want to suggest to the Minister of Highways (Mr. Kramer) were he here, because I think it's fairly important that we get to know that the so-called champagne highways that he refers to have saved a lot of lives for a lot of people in Saskatchewan. If he would get to work, he could do something fairly rapidly towards reducing the deaths in Saskatchewan by improving No.1 Highway and making it a two-lane highway between here and the Manitoba border. It's pretty obvious, Mr. Speaker, that a great number of deaths on this section of the highway if improved, could be prevented. But I don't think any of us who use it or any of the people who live on it have much hope from statements that have been issued from the Minister of Highways about these so-called highways, champagne highways as he refers to the four-lane roads, but I think right now is a very good opportunity

**Mr. Meakes:** — Mr. Speaker, I believe the Hon. Member has referred to a previous debate.

**Mr. Weatherald:** — I'm referring to a press release, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister put out and I think everyone is quite familiar with that press release.

**Mr. Speaker:** — The Member is not referring to another debate but I do think some of the comments made on the Minister of Highways would be best left to the Estimates.

**Mr. Weatherald:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's an appropriate time, when we are talking about saving people's lives, to bring this point to his attention right now because the most important thing, I think, at this time is that while the Government is setting up a committee there are some specific things the Government can do, Mr. Speaker, in the next year. We on this side expect that the Government should take some solid action on a number of areas that are available to be able to reduce traffic deaths. They don't have to wait for a committee to be able to report, to be able to take some of these actions. I want to mention right now, Mr. Speaker, with the number of people that have been killed on No. 1 Highway east of here to the Manitoba border, that certainly one of the ways of reducing the traffic deaths in Saskatchewan would be to improve that to a four-lane highway in the very, very near future.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weatherald:** — Anyone, Mr. Speaker, who has driven down that road in the summer time on a Saturday, a Friday or a Sunday very quickly found out that campers slow the traffic down rapidly to approximately 45 miles per hour. There is such heavy traffic coming

from the other direction that it is very difficult to pass. With these frustrations experienced by drivers you very quickly experience the people dodging in and out to be able to pass the people in front of them. This traffic is very slow. I think last winter we mentioned that on a section from Sintaluta to Wolseley that 19 people had been killed there. I don't have more recent statistics since that time, but I do know that the Government, if they want to and are really sincere about reducing traffic deaths in Saskatchewan, one of the things they can do is make a good, fast start on making No. 1 Highway a four-lane highway to the Manitoba border.

I want to also say, Mr. Speaker, to the Members opposite that there are other individual things that they can do. One of the things that we believe is that the Attorney General (Mr. Romanow) doesn't really need to set up a Review Committee at this particular time. This Review Committee can well be frozen and left as it is. One of the priorities, Mr. Speaker, should be that the committee at the very earliest possible time make a recommendation to the Government on whether the Review Committee is in the best interests or not. I think that the Attorney General did not really have to set up the committee under any circumstances. I think the very fact that he has set up the committee at least gives the appearance that violation of the law is another opportunity. I think the very fact that the committee is there gives the appearance that there is an opportunity for some changes if the person is convicted. I don't really think, Mr. Speaker, that the matter in question is particularly the legality. I think it is the appearance by the very action of setting up such a committee, that is of great concern to many people. I think that if the committee was not set up that there would be much more likelihood that most individuals would probably take the .08 test as being more severe than what they will now that the Review Committee is in operation.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I have just made a suggestion of two things that I think the Government can do in this direction to reduce the number of deaths in our province. One is the actual building of highways where a heavy concentration of traffic exists irrespective of their previous stance of talking about how the Liberals spent money on roads, so on and so forth. I think that we would forgive them for this if they built the odd four-lane highway where they are badly needed in Saskatchewan. I think that most people would be happy for it and we really don't need the Minister of Highway's new 'bad road' policy where he is trying to convince a few people in many of the rural parts of Saskatchewan that they are going to have all of their roads paved even if the mileage put on the cars on them is very low.

Mr. Speaker, naturally we will be supporting this motion and we will be participating in the committee. As a committee member I want to say a word about the committee that I have been on. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that there have been abuses in the committee system. I am not suggesting that the committee system should be abolished. I think that committees in the proper role, and I say the proper role, have a function in the legislative process. But I think that there is opportunity for and I think some of them have been taken advantage of by committee members and I want to say, as my colleague did, that all of us on this side will be watching very closely the conduct of the committees.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that some Members have taken advantage of the committee system and that this should cease. I make no bones whatsoever that more public meetings have been conducted than are necessary at the taxpayers' expense. Many of these meetings are not necessary to obtain the necessary information at the

**Mr. Speaker:** — Order! I believe that what has happened on committees this past summer should be discussed when those committee reports are before the House. If I allow this we get into the debate on the reports and once one side does it, it is back and forth. I would ask Members to reserve their comments on what committees have done until their reports are discussed.

**Mr. McIsaac:** — On a Point of Order. I don't think that is the point here at all. We are considering whether or not we shall establish a legislative committee to look into traffic safety. Surely, it is only fair and proper to look at the record of other legislative committees under this Government. How else can we talk about it without bringing up that subject?

**Mr. Speaker:** — The point has been raised that referring to one of the other committees, the report is now before the House, other reports will be coming in, it would be much better at that time. If you want to discuss what you hope the contents of this committee will be, that will be fine.

**Mr. Weatherald:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I simply say that the committee system has its usefulness but I believe that abuses have been setting in and I will say personally, as a Member of this House, that I intend to watch closely on this committee and how it conducts itself. I have no knowledge whatsoever as to whether I will be a member or not. But I am serving notice that if I was a member I think that some of the advantages, financial and otherwise, that Members have taken of the committee system should not be allowed to continue.

Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to adjourn this debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:15 o'clock p.m.