

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Third Session — Seventeenth Legislature
67th Day

Saturday, April 28, 1973.

The Assembly met at 9:30 o'clock a.m.
On the Orders of the Day.

Question

Hog in Legislature

Mr. J. Wiebe: (Morse) — Mr. Speaker, before the Orders of the Day I should like to direct a question to the Minister of Government Services (Mr. Brockelbank). The democratic hog which was let loose in the Legislative Building last week I noticed was a Yorkshire hog. I raise Duroc and Hampshire. It looked like a very good hog and I was looking into the possibilities of purchasing this hog to improve my herd. I was just wondering if the Minister could tell this side of the House what fate has befallen this democratic hog after it left the Chambers.

Hon. J.E. Brockelbank: (Minister of Government Services) — I lost control of it once it left the building and I have no knowledge of where it is. You might check with the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker: — I can tell the Members what happened to it. The Member for Yorkton (Mr. Carlson) offered to take it so as Speaker, I told him to take it and look after it. I gave it to the Member for Yorkton.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Adjourned Debates

Second Readings

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Romanow (Attorney General) that **Bill No. 120 — An Act respecting the operation of Snowmobiles**, be now read second time.

Mr. E.C. Whelan: (Regina North West) — Mr. Speaker, at the weekend of March 12, 1973, according to the Leader-Post, as a result of seven people being killed during that week and three on another weekend, a total of 85 people had died in snowmobile accidents in Canada thus far this year. At the same time we were considering snowmobile legislation, statistics were provided for us which showed that the number of deaths in Saskatchewan in snowmobile accidents during the winter of 1972-73 included:

1. A 12 year old hit a wire fence and died of head injuries.
2. A 12 year old died as a result of an accident in which a scarf caught in the engine while it was being repaired.
3. An 8 year old was killed when driving a snowmobile which hit an oil storage tank stand.

4. A 19 year old was killed when a snowmobile struck a power pole.

According to the Attorney General's remarks just the other day this figure has increased in the last weeks. According to the Saskatchewan Motor Club editorial in the January-February 1973 issue of the Saskatchewan Motorist, total deaths during the 1971-72 season as a result of snowmobile accidents stood 116, a decrease of two perhaps, from the previous year's total of 118. Over half of the fatalities involved collisions with other motor vehicles; 15 per cent were the result of breaking through the ice on lakes or rivers or running into open stretches of water; 65.7 per cent occurred on public roads. Of the total of 116 fatal snowmobile accidents, 69 took place at night, 96 of the total were drivers, 17 were passengers and three were pedestrians. Fatalities were highest among the 25-44 age group and that number totalled 52, followed by the 16 to 24 age group with 38 deaths and there were 11 deaths in the 15 and under age group. Eighty people in snowmobiles died in collisions with other vehicles. Operation of snowmobiles on public roads is still the major hazard. Sixty-six people were killed in accidents on the roads as follows: 40 on secondary roads, 19 on municipal roads and 7 on highways. This tells us clearly that we should look very carefully at the operation of snowmobiles on public roads.

In this province the latest figures available for hospital costs, covering those injured in snowmobile accidents, shows that in 1971 there were 111 people hospitalized for treatment of injuries, during the first four months of that year. Injuries occurred at the rate of one per day during this period. Analysis of the Saskatchewan statistics for this four-month period of 1971 shows that each person spent an average of seven days in the hospital. Adults who worked lost an average of 42.5 days before work was resumed. Fractures were the most common type of injury representing 44 per cent of all injuries. Thirty per cent of the accidents occurred after sunset. The driver of the snowmobile was the victim in 53 per cent of the accidents; the passenger was a victim in 31 per cent of the accidents; a bystander in 4 per cent of the accidents and other persons in 12 per cent.

The need for legislation has been recognized in other areas. I have in my files regulations that have been introduced in the Province of Quebec recently. These regulations appeared in the Gazette of that province in October 1972 and indicate the snowmobiles there must be licensed and must have an identifying number. While rigid, these regulations, according to newspaper reports have been effective. Deaths in snowmobile accidents this winter in Quebec, according to a Leader-Post news story, dropped to 22 from 40 for the corresponding period last year. In conjunction with the legislation I understand a safety program is carried on. During the snowmobile season last winter 1971-72 there were 73 fatalities in snowmobile accidents in the Province of Quebec. Indications are that as a result of the safety program and the legislation this figure will be cut in two this year. In some jurisdictions, for instance in France and this again, is from the Leader-Post story of February 13, 1973:

Operation of snowmobiles for personal use has been completely banned because of their noise and because they are considered unsafe in mountainous terrain.

Snowmobiles have become very popular, as the Attorney General pointed out, here in Saskatchewan. And the result has been that thousands of them have been purchased and it is estimated that there are 35,000 machines in Saskatchewan and within four years this figure could climb to 70,000. In the Province of Ontario, for instance, there are now 250,000 snowmobiles and in British Columbia 86,000. If we are going to sell snowmobiles in large numbers, if they are to be purchased and used by the population at large, then I suggest that we have to regulate the manner in which they are handled and operated and insure them as well. I approve of this legislation.

Recently a survey carried out by the Saskatchewan Safety Council showed that 87 per cent of the people surveyed — and I understand the survey was carried out to cover the entire province in a very judicious fashion — 87 per cent of those replying felt that there should be a minimum age limit for snowmobile operators: 46.8 per cent thought the age limit should be 16; 30.1 per cent thought the age limit should be 14 to 15. It should be pointed out that of those answering the survey, 37.1 per cent either owned or were going to buy a snowmobile and yet only 13.7 thought the maximum age should be lower than 14 years. I commend the Safety Council for the survey. It contains other valuable information. For instance, it shows that most people have snowmobiles for recreation and that 81.5 per cent said that the vehicles should be licensed and insured, while 75.5 per cent felt that specific areas should be set aside for the use of snowmobiles.

To sum up, the legislation is timely and necessary. It needs to be constantly reviewed. For instance, it is questionable as to whether or not we should allow this type of vehicle to run near our roads and our highways. There is some need to examine the possibility of carrying on safety programs and licensing snowmobiles through club organizations as has been done in Manitoba. Too, there is justification for opening up provincial parks and designate snowmobile trails for the use of the vehicle during the winter months. Finally, there is a need for a snowmobile safety handbook. Some are available from the manufacturers but probably the most reliable and the most useful handbook available at the moment has been published by the Province of Manitoba, Highways and Safety Division. It outlines the use of a snowmobile at night, for instance. It is complete with illustrations and does an excellent job of explaining the laws and regulations and setting out in reasonable terms the limitations in the use of the vehicle itself.

The final point, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make is that there are excellent areas for developing snowmobile trails in Saskatchewan and around Regina in particular, such as the valley of the Wascana and King's Park. If more snowmobiles are going to be purchased, and I'm sure they are, I suggest we proceed to develop snowmobile trails to keep vehicles off the highways and the roads where the record shows deaths have occurred. In addition, when the Highway Safety Committee of the Province is studying the safe operations of motor vehicles, I suggest they include the snowmobile and even the advertising of snowmobiles, if you like. They should look at the possibility of recognizing clubs for insurance and also their efforts to promote safety regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I will support the motion.

Motion agreed to and Bill read a second time.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:55 o'clock p.m.