

## **Questions to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation on the US Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative.**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A new American law came into effect today, the western hemisphere travel initiative, which requires all travellers crossing our borders, both U.S. and Canadian citizens, to possess a valid passport or other approved document.

My first question is to the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. With our busiest tourist season rapidly approaching, won't this initiative put a huge dent in our multibillion dollar tourist industry, and if so, what does your ministry plan to do to counteract this?

**The Speaker:** It's speculative, but go along.

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, U.S. visitors don't need these additional documents to enter Canada, but to get back home, they are going to need these documents starting today. The industry has been anticipating this for some time, and Travel Alberta has been working with the Canadian Tourism Commission to get information out to U.S. visitors and encourage them to get this documentation. Travel Alberta has also got a website that was set up that referred U.S. visitors to the U.S. passport website when they were considering trips to Alberta.

**Mr. Rodney:** My only supplemental question is to the same minister. With all that is going on in today's global economy, I can't imagine the timing for this could be much worse. Could the minister tell us what the Alberta tourism industry itself is doing to deal with this?

**Mrs. Ady:** Well, Mr. Speaker, most of the U.S. visitors that arrive in Alberta, fortunately, I suppose, for us, arrive by air, not by land. For the last year they've already had to have passports, so they've been prepared. Our most recent statistics show that we have had small increases in U.S. visitors over the last year whereas other parts of the country have seen a decline. Mr. Speaker, if it is a hassle for us to get passports to go on holidays, I'd like to suggest that all Albertans stay in the province this year. We've got some great values. You could go to the Travel Alberta site and get one of those traveller cards that give you all the discounts. So stay in the province. It's not a hassle.