

## ETS the solution to cab problems

TRANSIT SAFETY IN EDMONTON HAS BEEN A HOT topic among commuters lately, and now city cab drivers are sounding off on the matter.

They have good reason to be afraid, as Edmonton isn't lacking in instances of violence towards cabbies. When a city cab driver had his throat slashed by a 14-year-old passenger last month, the debate about driver safety was sparked once again.

Now that Edmonton taxi companies have come forth once again this week to oppose the push for more cab licenses, the question of how drivers will be protected has been raised. Some cab drivers have pointed out that the difficulty of getting a cab during peak evening and weekend hours isn't due to a cab shortage, but to a deficit of drivers who are willing to service the more questionable clientele commonly found on Whyte Avenue during the weekends. Ideas ranging from security shields to late-night premiums to evening barflies have been suggested, but none of these seem to recognize the root of many violent incidents.

Rowdy and intoxicated riders provoked by fare disputes aren't going to be pacified by the sudden discovery that last week's \$20 cab ride now costs extra. And since violent passengers are certainly in the minority, it doesn't make sense to apply a blanket "premium" fee to all late-night riders simply to lure more drivers into a market that they're currently avoiding for safety concerns.

Considering Edmonton's cab companies have already demonstrated their unwillingness to foot the bill on security shields, it's not likely that they'll be shelling out any extra cash in order to hook more drivers. It would seem that the owners and drivers have reached a stalemate, leaving some riders stranded, but there's another party that could take advantage of this standstill: the Edmonton Transit System.

It's no secret that ETS currently has less-than-stellar late-night service: with most routes ending after evening peak hours and some major routes disappearing before many bars close (including the LRT), it can be difficult to guarantee a safe ride home at night. This, combined with staggered cab service, is likely to lead to a number of problems—impaired driving charges in Edmonton have already spiked by 25 per cent in the past year., for example City Council has said that they won't subsidize cab companies' expenses, since they're privately owned companies; however, this excuse simply doesn't fly when it comes to their own transit service. There's enough of a demand to increase late-night service in the city, if not in a single bound, then at the very least incrementally.

It's a shame that the city has taken a back seat in the ongoing debate over passenger and driver safety in transit, and the small steps they've taken so far simply haven't made enough of an impact. As a public service, Edmonton Transit should be taking a much more active role in, as the city ad campaign itself suggests, curbing the violence.

MIKE KENDRICK  
Design & Production Editor

## Address students too

LAST WEEK, WE PUBLISHED A GUIDE TO SOME OF the marquee events during the University's centennial celebrations. One of those events was the President's Address, of which we said, "if you can find a spot, it'll probably be worth catching."

Of course, finding a spot is going to be harder than anticipated, as the event is, in fact, invite only. While I understand that Convocation Hall is a tiny space to hold this sort of event—especially with all the sponsors and alumni that will want to come—the fact that they aren't allowing at-large students to attend is a joke.

After all, cutting the students out of this sort of event by effectively saying "they can watch it later via webcast" is ignoring the fact that universities exist to provide education to those very same students. I'm not saying the ceremony should be packed with Listerites—just that there should be a small, designated section where students who wish to attend can do so, either through an open RSVP or a first-come, first-serve basis.

PAUL OWEN  
Managing Editor



Steve Dollansky makes the most of Council's recent seat reduction

LAUREN ALSTON

## LETTERS

### Nicol Council's equivalent of angry muppet hecklers

As well as taking some cheap shots at me from the peanut gallery, SU Business councillor Scott Nicol complained in his letter in Tuesday's edition that the *Gateway* should spend more time covering student council debates (re: "Cybersquatting, unlike Council, isn't newsworthy," 15 January).

Well it looks like Nicol should take a lesson or two from Arts councillor Caitlin Schulz, whose debate over the size and efficiency of Student Council made the front cover, or Vice-President (Academic) Bobby Samuel, whose fight for more affordable textbooks also ended up on the front page of Tuesday's *Gateway*.

Nicol, instead of spending your SU-paid time on Council protesting whether or not the SU should pay to feed you at meetings, debate something that students care about, and you'll get the attention you yearn for.

DAVE COURNOYER  
Arts IV

### Premier's seeming lack of foresight unsettling

I'd like to spell something out for councillor Scott Nicol, as I think it's

important to understand the symbolism behind the conflict between Ed Stelmach and Dave Cournoyer.

On the contrary, Scott, Ed Stelmach suing a university student in this case is quite newsworthy. The inability of Premier Stelmach to register edstelmach.ca beforehand is representative of his (and, I would argue, the Tory government's) inability to think ahead. Given that Mr Stelmach represents and is supposedly looking out for the best interests of Albertans, I grow concerned when he doesn't take the opportunity to think preemptively on such a matter.

What kind of confidence could I have in him dealing with other issues that require foresight, such as nuclear power, the tar sands disaster, health care, and postsecondary education? Not much, I can tell you. As a side note, it's also humorous that the economic system that his government supports (that is, everything is up for sale) let him down in such a manner.

DALLAS THOMPSON  
Education IV

### Stelmach's got money for everything but website

So, Premier Stelmach, his wife, and an entourage of who knows how many are flying to Washington, DC, at a cost of thousands of dollars to Alberta taxpayers. Upon arrival, they will wine and dine who knows

how many similar taxpayer-funded trough-feeders. What enrages me is that our problems aren't in Washington, DC. The problems are here.

So what is this excuse for a government doing sucking up to American politicians at this time? Do they think the US might not want to continue to buy our oil in the future? Where else do they think they'll get it from if present sources dry up, or if their Middle East "allies" were to cut off oil shipments to America, should that ever happen?

This trip is just another example of an Alberta taxpayer-funded winter getaway to hobnob with some of DC's political elite, and more importantly, to give the appearance that Stelmach is doing something of substance before the predicted March election. Nothing, absolutely nothing, will result from this expensive excursion other than Steady Eddie and company viewing some of Washington's famous buildings from the inside of a chauffeured limousine and drinking expensive imported wine while dining on foie gras, imported Alberta beef, and Maine lobster, all at our expense.

This is what Albertans get, and will continue to get, by voting for a one-party elected dictatorship. And it serves them bloody well right.

When will Alberta's electorate wake up and boot this 36-year-old government out of office? Answer: "When hell freezes over,"

or maybe when the cost of gas becomes so expensive their pick-up trucks will have to be put up on blocks.

J F HOLOWCHAK  
Education Alumnus

### An open letter from Canadian Blood Services

Recently, you may have heard about Canadian Blood Services' (CBS) policy regarding the deferral of men who have had sex with other men (MSM) even once since 1977 being debated in the media and at your University (re: "Students want gay-blood ban lifted," 15 January). CBS understands that this is a complex and sensitive issue, and we would like to provide you with some information to better understand this safety policy.

Why do we have the MSM deferral policy if we test all donated blood? Because our state-of-the-art test for HIV has a limitation. In the early stages of infection, known as the "window period," the virus is undetectable. What this means is that without a screening process, there is the potential for an infected unit to get through the system and be transfused into a patient. And recently released reports from the Public Health Agency of Canada indicate that MSM continues to account for the highest rate of HIV infection.

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