



Second Session, 38th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF  
DEBATES OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
(HANSARD)

**Thursday, February 16, 2006**  
**Afternoon Sitting**  
**Volume 6, Number 4**

THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

ISSN 0709-1281

**PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA**  
(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR  
Her Honour the Honourable Iona V. Campagnolo, CM, OBC

**SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT**

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
Honourable Bill Barisoff

**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**

Premier and President of the Executive Council .....	Hon. Gordon Campbell
Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations .....	Hon. John van Dongen
Deputy Premier and Minister of Education and Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy .....	Hon. Shirley Bond
Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation .....	Hon. Tom Christensen
Minister of Advanced Education and Minister Responsible for Research and Technology .....	Hon. Murray Coell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands.....	Hon. Pat Bell
Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism.....	Hon. Wally Oppal, QC
Minister of Children and Family Development.....	Hon. Stan Hagen
Minister of State for Childcare .....	Hon. Linda Reid
Minister of Community Services and Minister Responsible for Seniors' and Women's Issues.....	Hon. Ida Chong
Minister of Economic Development and Minister Responsible for the Asia-Pacific Initiative and the Olympics.....	Hon. Colin Hansen
Minister of Employment and Income Assistance .....	Hon. Claude Richmond
Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources .....	Hon. Richard Neufeld
Minister of State for Mining.....	Hon. Bill Bennett
Minister of Environment and Minister Responsible for Water Stewardship and Sustainable Communities .....	Hon. Barry Penner
Minister of Finance.....	Hon. Carole Taylor
Minister of Forests and Range and Minister Responsible for Housing .....	Hon. Rich Coleman
Minister of Health .....	Hon. George Abbott
Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services .....	Hon. Michael de Jong
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General.....	Hon. John Les
Minister of Small Business and Revenue and Minister Responsible for Deregulation .....	Hon. Rick Thorpe
Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts .....	Hon. Olga Illich
Minister of Transportation.....	Hon. Kevin Falcon

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**

Leader of the Official Opposition .....	Carole James
Deputy Speaker .....	Sindi Hawkins
Assistant Deputy Speaker .....	Sue Hammell
Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole.....	Harry Bloy
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly .....	E. George MacMinn, OBC, QC
Clerk Assistant .....	Robert Vaive
Clerk Assistant and Law Clerk .....	Ian D. Izard, QC
Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees .....	Craig H. James
Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk .....	Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms.....	A.A. Humphreys
Director, Hansard Services .....	Anthony Dambrauskas
Legislative Librarian .....	Jane Taylor
Legislative Comptroller.....	Dan Arbic

## ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS

Abbott, Hon. George (L).....Shuswap  
Austin, Robin (NDP).....Skeena  
Bains, Harry (NDP).....Surrey-Newton  
Barisoff, Hon. Bill (L).....Penticton-Okanagan Valley  
Bell, Hon. Pat (L).....Prince George North  
Bennett, Hon. Bill (L).....East Kootenay  
Black, Iain (L).....Port Moody-Westwood  
Bloy, Harry (L).....Burquitlam  
Bond, Hon. Shirley (L).....Prince George-Mount Robson  
Brar, Jagrup (NDP).....Surrey-Panorama Ridge  
Campbell, Hon. Gordon (L).....Vancouver-Point Grey  
Cantelon, Ron (L).....Nanaimo-Parksville  
Chong, Hon. Ida (L).....Oak Bay-Gordon Head  
Chouhan, Raj (NDP).....Burnaby-Edmonds  
Christensen, Hon. Tom (L).....Okanagan-Vernon  
Chudnovsky, Dave (NDP).....Vancouver-Kensington  
Coell, Hon. Murray (L).....Saanich North and the Islands  
Coleman, Hon. Rich (L).....Fort Langley-Aldergrove  
Conroy, Katrine (NDP).....West Kootenay-Boundary  
Coons, Gary (NDP).....North Coast  
Cubberley, David (NDP).....Saanich South  
de Jong, Hon. Michael (L).....Abbotsford-Mount Lehman  
Dix, Adrian (NDP).....Vancouver-Kingsway  
Evans, Corky (NDP).....Nelson-Creston  
Falcon, Hon. Kevin (L).....Surrey-Cloverdale  
Farnworth, Mike (NDP).....Port Coquitlam-Burke Mountain  
Fleming, Rob (NDP).....Victoria-Hillside  
Fraser, Scott (NDP).....Alberni-Qualicum  
Gentner, Guy (NDP).....Delta North  
Hagen, Hon. Stan (L).....Comox Valley  
Hammell, Sue (NDP).....Surrey-Green Timbers  
Hansen, Hon. Colin (L).....Vancouver-Quilchena  
Hawes, Randy (L).....Maple Ridge-Mission  
Hawkins, Sindi (L).....Kelowna-Mission  
Hayer, Dave S. (L).....Surrey-Tynehead  
Hogg, Gordon (L).....Surrey-White Rock  
Horgan, John (NDP).....Malahat-Juan de Fuca  
Horning, Al (L).....Kelowna-Lake Country  
Ilich, Hon. Olga (L).....Richmond Centre  
James, Carole (NDP).....Victoria-Beacon Hill  
Jarvis, Daniel (L).....North Vancouver-Seymour  
Karagianis, Maurine (NDP).....Esquimalt-Metchosin  
Krog, Leonard (NDP).....Nanaimo  
Krueger, Kevin (L).....Kamloops-North Thompson  
Kwan, Jenny Wai Ching (NDP).....Vancouver-Mount Pleasant  
Lali, Harry (NDP).....Yale-Lillooet  
Lee, Richard T. (L).....Burnaby North  
Lekstrom, Blair (L).....Peace River South  
Les, Hon. John (L).....Chilliwack-Sumas  
Macdonald, Norm (NDP).....Columbia River-Revelstoke  
MacKay, Dennis (L).....Bulkley Valley-Stikine  
Mayencourt, Lorne (L).....Vancouver-Burrard  
McIntyre, Joan (L).....West Vancouver-Garibaldi  
Neufeld, Hon. Richard (L).....Peace River North  
Nuraney, John (L).....Burnaby-Willingdon  
Oppal, Hon. Wally, QC (L).....Vancouver-Fraserview  
Penner, Hon. Barry (L).....Chilliwack-Kent  
Polak, Mary (L).....Langley  
Puchmayr, Chuck (NDP).....New Westminster  
Ralston, Bruce (NDP).....Surrey-Whalley  
Reid, Hon. Linda (L).....Richmond East  
Richmond, Hon. Claude (L).....Kamloops  
Robertson, Gregor (NDP).....Vancouver-Fairview  
Roddick, Valerie (L).....Delta South  
Routley, Doug (NDP).....Cowichan-Ladysmith  
Rustad, John (L).....Prince George-Omineca  
Sather, Michael (NDP).....Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows  
Simons, Nicholas (NDP).....Powell River-Sunshine Coast  
Simpson, Bob (NDP).....Cariboo North  
Simpson, Shane (NDP).....Vancouver-Hastings  
Sultan, Ralph (L).....West Vancouver-Capilano  
Taylor, Hon. Carole (L).....Vancouver-Langara  
Thorne, Diane (NDP).....Coquitlam-Maillardville  
Thorpe, Hon. Rick (L).....Okanagan-Westside  
Trevena, Claire (NDP).....North Island  
van Dongen, Hon. John (L).....Abbotsford-Clayburn  
Whittred, Katherine (L).....North Vancouver-Lonsdale  
Wyse, Charlie (NDP).....Cariboo South  
Yap, John (L).....Richmond-Steveston

## LIST OF MEMBERS BY RIDING

Abbotsford-Clayburn.....Hon. John van Dongen  
Abbotsford-Mount Lehman.....Hon. Michael de Jong  
Alberni-Qualicum.....Scott Fraser  
Bulkley Valley-Stikine.....Dennis MacKay  
Burnaby North.....Richard T. Lee  
Burnaby-Edmonds.....Raj Chouhan  
Burnaby-Willingdon.....John Nuraney  
Burquitlam.....Harry Bloy  
Cariboo North.....Bob Simpson  
Cariboo South.....Charlie Wyse  
Chilliwack-Kent.....Hon. Barry Penner  
Chilliwack-Sumas.....Hon. John Les  
Columbia River-Revelstoke.....Norm Macdonald  
Comox Valley.....Hon. Stan Hagen  
Coquitlam-Maillardville.....Diane Thorne  
Cowichan-Ladysmith.....Doug Routley  
Delta North.....Guy Gentner  
Delta South.....Valerie Roddick  
East Kootenay.....Hon. Bill Bennett  
Esquimalt-Metchosin.....Maurine Karagianis  
Fort Langley-Aldergrove.....Hon. Rich Coleman  
Kamloops.....Hon. Claude Richmond  
Kamloops-North Thompson.....Kevin Krueger  
Kelowna-Lake Country.....Al Horning  
Kelowna-Mission.....Sindi Hawkins  
Langley.....Mary Polak  
Malahat-Juan de Fuca.....John Horgan  
Maple Ridge-Mission.....Randy Hawes  
Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows.....Michael Sather  
Nanaimo.....Leonard Krog  
Nanaimo-Parksville.....Ron Cantelon  
Nelson-Creston.....Corky Evans  
New Westminster.....Chuck Puchmayr  
North Coast.....Gary Coons  
North Island.....Claire Trevena  
North Vancouver-Lonsdale.....Katherine Whittred  
North Vancouver-Seymour.....Daniel Jarvis  
Oak Bay-Gordon Head.....Hon. Ida Chong  
Okanagan-Vernon.....Hon. Tom Christensen  
Okanagan-Westside.....Hon. Rick Thorpe  
Peace River North.....Hon. Richard Neufeld  
Peace River South.....Blair Lekstrom  
Penticton-Okanagan Valley.....Hon. Bill Barisoff  
Port Coquitlam-Burke Mountain.....Mike Farnworth  
Port Moody-Westwood.....Iain Black  
Powell River-Sunshine Coast.....Nicholas Simons  
Prince George North.....Hon. Pat Bell  
Prince George-Mount Robson.....Hon. Shirley Bond  
Prince George-Omineca.....John Rustad  
Richmond Centre.....Hon. Olga Ilich  
Richmond East.....Hon. Linda Reid  
Richmond-Steveston.....John Yap  
Saanich North and the Islands.....Hon. Murray Coell  
Saanich South.....David Cubberley  
Shuswap.....Hon. George Abbott  
Skeena.....Robin Austin  
Surrey-Cloverdale.....Hon. Kevin Falcon  
Surrey-Green Timbers.....Sue Hammell  
Surrey-Newton.....Harry Bains  
Surrey-Panorama Ridge.....Jagrup Brar  
Surrey-Tynehead.....Dave S. Hayer  
Surrey-Whalley.....Bruce Ralston  
Surrey-White Rock.....Gordon Hogg  
Vancouver-Burrard.....Lorne Mayencourt  
Vancouver-Fairview.....Gregor Robertson  
Vancouver-Fraserview.....Hon. Wally Oppal, QC  
Vancouver-Hastings.....Shane Simpson  
Vancouver-Kensington.....David Chudnovsky  
Vancouver-Kingsway.....Adrian Dix  
Vancouver-Langara.....Hon. Carole Taylor  
Vancouver-Mount Pleasant.....Jenny Wai Ching Kwan  
Vancouver-Point Grey.....Hon. Gordon Campbell  
Vancouver-Quilchena.....Hon. Colin Hansen  
Victoria-Beacon Hill.....Carole James  
Victoria-Hillside.....Rob Fleming  
West Kootenay-Boundary.....Katrine Conroy  
West Vancouver-Capilano.....Ralph Sultan  
West Vancouver-Garibaldi.....Joan McIntyre  
Yale-Lillooet.....Harry Lali



## CONTENTS

Thursday, February 16, 2006  
Afternoon Sitting

### Routine Proceedings

	<b>Page</b>
Introductions by Members .....	2283
Tributes .....	2283
Denny Morrison	
Hon. R. Neufeld	
Introductions by Members .....	2283
Statements (Standing Order 25B) .....	2284
New schools in North Vancouver	
K. Whittred	
White Cane Week	
C. Trevena	
Chinese New Year	
J. Yap	
Funding for post-secondary education in rural B.C.	
B. Simpson	
Pacific Agriculture Show and B.C. agriculture industry	
V. Roddick	
Eating disorders	
G. Robertson	
Oral Questions.....	2286
Organizational changes in Children and Family Development Ministry	
A. Dix	
Hon. S. Hagen	
J. Kwan	
R. Austin	
M. Farnworth	
Compliance of Copeman clinic with federal and provincial legislation	
D. Cubberley	
Hon. G. Abbott	
Quality of cleaning and food services at health care facilities	
M. Sather	
Hon. G. Abbott	
Closing of acute care beds at Merritt Hospital	
H. Lali	
Hon. G. Abbott	

Throne Speech Debate ( <i>continued</i> ) .....	2290
D. Hayer	
C. Trevena	
Hon. B. Penner	
B. Ralston	
A. Horning	
R. Austin	
Hon. B. Bennett	
C. Wyse	

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2006

The House met at 2:03 p.m.

### Introductions by Members

**Hon. M. de Jong:** In a week or two that I'm sure has been filled with firsts for him, I think this is Gary Lunn's first visit to this chamber as the new federal Minister of Natural Resources. I'm not sure he's here to learn from our practices in demeanour, having participated in a few question periods of his own. I think all members would want to congratulate him and welcome him to our chamber here in British Columbia.

**G. Coons:** I'd like to welcome to the gallery today my other daughter, Hannah Coons. She's on her reading break from Prince George — from UNBC. I hope everybody makes her welcome today.

**Hon. S. Bond:** There was a very special event held in the legislative buildings today. On behalf of certainly this side the House, but I'm sure on behalf of all members of this House, we want to express our sincere thanks to Singh and Sharan and Sindi Hawkins's brother Lucky and all of their friends — our deep appreciation for the wonderful luncheon that we enjoyed.

[1405]

More importantly, to you — to our colleague — we want to express our thanks that today we can celebrate the second year of the new life for our very special colleague. We know that we are so delighted and so happy that things have gone so very well. We want to welcome the family that is here today, and we're so happy to see them smiling. What a difference it makes. We want to recognize you, to thank you, and to wish our colleague much, much happiness and health as we move forward.

[Applause.]

### Tributes

DENNY MORRISON

**Hon. R. Neufeld:** It's with great joy that I rise to introduce not someone that's here but a 20-year-old man from Fort St. John. He is in Torino competing in speed skating and just won a silver medal this morning. He competes in the men's team pursuit, in which there are five team members, and he has some other competition that he's doing. I know the community of Fort St. John and the people from northeast B.C. are extremely proud of this young man, who has been skating ever since he was three years old and has an impressive record.

I would appreciate it, Mr. Speaker, if you on behalf of all of us in this Legislature — I know the Premier has written a letter — will write a letter congratulating him and sending him our warm wishes for a job well done. His name is Denny Morrison.

[Applause.]

**Mr. Speaker:** Yes, we'll make sure we write letters to all our Olympic athletes from British Columbia.

### Introductions by Members

**Hon. P. Bell:** I actually have two introductions today. The first one is a constituent of mine from Prince George North, someone who comes down and visits the Legislature pretty well annually — a great supporter and a great friend, Iris McIntyre. Please make her very welcome.

On behalf of myself, of the Deputy Premier, the member for Prince George–Mount Robson, and of the member for Prince George–Omineca, we are very proud, as well, to be represented in Turin in the Games. Yesterday in fact we had Chris Wong, who is a constituent of mine, the son of Kit and Loraine Wong, finish 14th in freestyle in moguls with a score of 22.88. Congratulations to Chris.

**Hon. G. Abbott:** In the gallery today, as well, is Steve Vander Wal, who has been my ministerial assistant in Health for about eight months since I arrived in that portfolio. I regret to advise the House today that Steve is moving along to pursue other opportunities. I had a great time working with Steve, and I know that the Deputy Premier — when she was Minister of Advanced Education and later of Health — also enjoyed working with Steve.

Steve tells me that he absolutely loved working with the Deputy Premier. I think, in a way, he may have been spoiled by her, but he does want me to make it very clear that his departure is in no way linked or related to my sometimes crusty personality and disposition. All best wishes to Steve in his future.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** This, as we know, is Multiculturalism Week, and I would like to introduce two guests in the gallery today who are in the vanguard of the Surrey Memorial Hospital's outreach program to the Indo-Canadian community. The first is Jas Cheema. She is the manager of diversity services at Surrey Memorial.

[1410]

Every day at work through her many volunteer activities, she helps make health care more understandable and accessible to people in the Fraser Valley. She educates physicians and employees on cross-cultural issues. She also attends many events to help build better understanding between the community and the hospital.

As well, she is accompanied by Simrita Johal-Virk. She is the senior media relations consultant for Fraser Health. Simrita works with a wide range of health professionals. She identifies and supports them in media relations. This is the first position of its kind with a B.C. health authority, and she draws on her knowledge of the Indo-Canadian community so as to make more understandable the workings of the health authorities to the diverse community in the Fraser Valley.

Please join with me in recognizing the work of Jas Cheema and Simrita Johal-Virk in crossing cultures

and building bridges of knowledge and understanding with the Fraser Health Authority. They set a great example for all of us, particularly during this Multiculturalism Week.

**D. Jarvis:** It's my pleasure to introduce 80 grade ten students from Seycove Community School. At least, I think some of them are in the audience. I'm not sure. I'll come back and introduce them if they're not.

Interjection.

**D. Jarvis:** Okay, good. Good to see them.

They are here under the auspices of their teachers Ms. Jill Williams and Mr. Ryan Earl. Would everyone please give them a warm welcome.

**J. Rustad:** I rise to ask the House to please make welcome Mitch Mallender, a cousin of mine who is with that grade ten class. I just wanted to say thanks to the staff and also to the school for giving those opportunities for the students to be able to come and partake and see a little bit about what we do down here and, of course, to enrich their knowledge and understanding of civics.

**S. Hawkins:** I have some very special guests in the gallery here today. First of all, my parents have been visiting me this week, and it's been very special. I want to thank them for helping me host a meal today that we were very pleased to share with you. My parents Manohar Singh and Sharan Kaur Ahluwalia are here, and also my brother Lucky.

With my parents are friends of theirs, Balbir Saini and Parveen Saini, and also from Kelowna is a very dear friend who has supported me for the last ten years and has been absolutely delightful, Maxine Dehart. Would the House please help me make them welcome.

#### Statements (Standing Order 25B)

##### NEW SCHOOLS IN NORTH VANCOUVER

**K. Whittred:** It is with great pleasure that I rise today to talk about two new schools — that's two new schools — being built in North Vancouver.

The new Sutherland Secondary School began construction in December, and it's expected to be completed late in 2007. This is, in fact, the first new high school that has been built in North Van since 1979, and I am absolutely delighted to have been a part of this project.

I've had the pleasure over the last couple of years to work with the parents, the administration at Sutherland, the teachers at Sutherland, the North Vancouver school district and the board since the beginning of this venture. I've also worked with the minister and the Ministry of Education, the staff, to ensure this project's success.

Our new Sutherland School will be state of the art. The design was created with teacher and student input, and I believe it will be long-lasting, creating a super learning environment for the students.

Tomorrow I will attend the groundbreaking for the new Westview Elementary, where construction is just beginning. The Westview project is a model of a school that has partnered with early childhood educators and the community to provide opportunities for preschool learners.

[1415]

We learned earlier today of the very good news that the Ministry of Children and Family Development has confirmed the \$284,000 that was needed to complete the project. Other partners in this endeavour are the North Shore Neighbourhood House and the city of North Vancouver. Westview also is expected to be completed in the later part of 2007.

I look forward to continuing to work with the students and educators in North Vancouver-Lonsdale to ensure that all of them enjoy a top-quality learning environment.

##### WHITE CANE WEEK

**C. Trevena:** I'd like to take the opportunity to tell the House about the 60th anniversary of White Cane Week. White Cane Week was established by the Canadian Council of the Blind in 1946 by blind war veterans. This year White Cane Week was held last week with a theme: the white cane is a symbol of ability and not disability, changing what it means to be blind.

The Canadian Council of the Blind held national events to highlight a different view of what it is to be blind. There was a blind curling bonspiel in Ottawa; across Canada, a five-pin bowling tournament; and an exhibition hockey match. Being blind does not have to limit you.

There are approximately 665,000 blind and visually impaired Canadians, and about 75,000 of those live in B.C. The object of White Cane Week has always been educational. In the first White Cane Week only a handful of individuals who were blind or visually impaired participated, but over the years the White Cane Week program has evolved to reflect the changing situations of people who are blind or visually impaired.

The week used to demonstrate the concerns for rehabilitation and blindness prevention, but recently events have begun to emphasize the equal capabilities and talents of people who are blind and visually impaired.

The white cane? Well, in 1921 James Bigg, a photographer from Bristol in England, was blinded in an accident. Released from hospital, he had the idea of painting his cane white so it could easily be seen at night. The advantages of the white cane soon became apparent as people were alerted to Bigg's blindness and assisted him, guiding him and warning him of obstacles. Now the white cane is the internationally accepted symbol of blindness. I would like to thank you for this opportunity.



## CHINESE NEW YEAR

**J. Yap:** I rise today to highlight a time of the year which is celebrated by people of Chinese heritage here in British Columbia, across Canada and around the world — that is, of course, Chinese New Year. On January 1, according to the Gregorian calendar, we marked the start of the year 2006. According to the Chinese calendar, we are starting the year 4704.

It's fitting that this week we are marking Multiculturalism Week just as we wrap up Chinese New Year, which this year started on Sunday, January 29. With the traditional 15 days of observing the Chinese New Year, the celebrations and festivities only completed this past Sunday, the 15th day of the new year.

In my community, Richmond, like many throughout B.C., Chinese New Year was celebrated with great enthusiasm. There were special community activities, including traditional lion and dragon dances and displays of Chinese artistry, music and dance. There were, of course, many traditional feasts and festivals with special foods, countless opportunities for families to visit with each other and with friends. Chinese New Year is a time to honour elders, remember family members who have departed, celebrate blessings and seek new blessings.

I know that many members of this House participated in Chinese New Year activities. I was pleased to see many members at the annual Chinese New Year parade in Vancouver's Chinatown, which drew large crowds of people. It was great to see a wide variety of people from different cultures participating in the parade. This exemplifies how Chinese New Year is becoming a time for celebration for all people, not just those of Chinese ancestry.

[1420]

This year is the Year of the Dog. According to tradition, we can expect this year to offer great potential for success and prosperity, which is great for all British Columbians. Accordingly, I wish all British Columbians a prosperous and happy Chinese New Year or, in Cantonese, *gung hay fat choy* or, in Mandarin, *sun ninn fye lock*.

FUNDING FOR POST-SECONDARY  
EDUCATION IN RURAL B.C.

**B. Simpson:** On January 26, I had the pleasure of attending the opening of the new North Cariboo community campus in Quesnel. This campus is situated on the bench above the Quesnel River and features local wood products and a state-of-the-art geothermal energy system. It will be utilized by both the College of New Caledonia and the University of Northern British Columbia, and it contains a large atrium which can be used for a wide array of community events.

This new campus is the result of the vision and perseverance of a small group of people in Quesnel. Mayor Nate Bello, Cariboo regional district director Mary Glassford and then-regional manager of CNC John Bowman formed the nucleus of a group that sold

this vision first to the NDP government, which secured the land, and, second, to the current government, which funded the actual building of the campus. While the community is appreciative of the new campus, the physical plant is just the start of a more comprehensive vision for education and training in Quesnel. There is growing concern in the community that this part of the vision may be much harder to realize.

This vision involves offering the broadest range of educational opportunities at the campus so that we can retain our youth, grow and diversify our economy, and attract people and dollars into our community as a result of the unique programming the campus will offer. In order to realize this vision, however, the provincial government must find a different mechanism to fund rural campuses. It is almost impossible for these campuses to stabilize and grow their course offerings because of the way they are funded now.

Rural campuses find themselves caught in the catch-22 of trying to boost enrolment without being able to guarantee course offerings until they secure a minimum number of enrollees. If the full potential of this new campus is to be realized, I urge the provincial government to work with rural British Columbia to find different funding formulas for these smaller campuses so they can provide secure and stable course offerings year over year.

PACIFIC AGRICULTURE SHOW  
AND B.C. AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

**V. Roddick:** Tomorrow I will be attending the eighth annual Pacific Agriculture Show in Abbotsford where over 200 dealers and manufacturers showcase the latest agricultural technology for thousands of our farmers, our food producers. The show attracts attendance from all the livestock and horticultural sectors — from cattle to hogs, from vegetables to flowers, and everything in between. It's the largest agriculture exhibition in the province and is the premier event for B.C.'s unique agricultural industry.

I say unique for a good reason. Here in B.C. we incorporate tried-and-true farming practices with cutting-edge ideas brought to B.C. by our New Age farmers who are from all different backgrounds and cultures. Yesterday in the throne speech we reaffirmed our commitment to encourage B.C. farmers to come forward with their ideas to put more of their local products into B.C. schools. This is key, because it's important not only to ensure that our young people eat healthfully but also to show them where their food actually comes from. Education is step one in getting them to understand the complexities involved in putting real food on their dinner plates.

[1425]

I encourage everyone to buy B.C. not just to support local farmers, which is hugely important, but also because it tastes better, and it can be better for you. I like to think of this show as another opportunity to teach people about the importance of producing good food — safe, local, fresh. You still have to eat to live.

## EATING DISORDERS

**G. Robertson:** Speaking of eating, last week was Eating Disorder Awareness Week. On a more sombre note, I'll remind the members, this is an international campaign which happens every year in February. The B.C. campaign was started in 1993 by the Eating Disorder Resource Centre, which is based at B.C.'s Children's Hospital in my riding. This campaign exists to increase awareness of prolific eating disorders like anorexia, bulimia and binge-eating disorder.

These primarily affect women between the ages of 15 and 24 years, with tragic consequences. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate of all mental illnesses. The annual death rate associated with anorexia is more than 12 times higher than the annual death rate due to all other causes combined for females between 15 and 24.

Ninety percent of people with eating disorders are women. Approximately 1 percent of young women suffer from anorexia, and 4 percent have bulimia. Without treatment, up to 20 percent of these people die. With treatment, the number falls to between 2 percent and 3 percent, so treatment is absolutely critical. St. Paul's and Women's and Children's hospitals have excellent treatment centres here in B.C. for these disorders.

Eating disorders are complex mental illnesses with a biological basis that's modified and influenced by emotional and cultural factors. The stigma that is associated with these eating disorders has long kept individuals suffering in silence, inhibited funding for crucial research and created barriers to treatment.

The impact of powerful image-moulding marketing is at the root of these disorders, affecting self-confidence. The proliferation of junk food and fast food — not from B.C. — further magnifies the consequences. As the slogan for the National Eating Disorder Information Centre says: "It's not our bodies that need changing; it's our attitudes." I'd like the House to salute all of the people who work hard to organize Eating Disorder Awareness Week and those who are dedicated to fighting these disorders through research and treatment.

## Oral Questions

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES IN CHILDREN  
AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

**A. Dix:** Under the Child, Family and Community Service Act, the Minister of Children and Family Development designates the director of child protection, who in turn delegates the provision of child protection services across the province to social workers. Yesterday the Minister of Children and Family Development stated he was unaware that the Premier's office had negotiated the departure of his director of child protection.

My question to the Deputy Premier is this. Who made the decision to replace Jeremy Berland, and why

was the minister, who has a legal responsibility in this regard, kept out of the loop?

**Hon. S. Hagen:** The opposition member is incorrect. Mr. Berland is still the assistant deputy minister in the Ministry of Children and Family Development. We have replaced him in his role as the director of child protection with another longtime civil servant — 15 years' experience, as a matter of fact — a person who's been doing that job for the last several months while Mr. Berland has been off recovering from an auto accident.

The Premier's office played no role in this. This was a negotiation between the ministry and the University of Victoria and Mr. Berland.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Vancouver-Kingsway has a supplemental.

**A. Dix:** Well, hon. Speaker, since this crisis began, the Premier has sent in new political staff to take over the minister's office, new communications staff to take over his communications office. This is a time of real crisis for children, for front-line workers and for families.

The Premier has responded again and again not with better spin but certainly with more spin. Now the Premier himself is causing chaos in the Ministry of Children and Family Development with bizarre and arbitrary personnel moves that have left the ministry without a permanent deputy minister, without a permanent director of child protection and apparently without a minister at a time of crisis.

[1430]

My question to the acting Premier is this. With child protection suffering the effects of the Premier's policies, when will he act to restore political accountability to the Ministry of Children and Family Development?

**Hon. S. Hagen:** You know, I cannot understand why that member is trying to create a crisis in a ministry that does a lot of good work. I'm proud of the people who work in the Ministry of Children and Family Development, whether it's the front-line social workers, the regional managers or the people at head office. They do their job because they care, and they care about the kids of this province.

When he insinuates that nothing is going on.... Let me foreshadow what we're going to be announcing over the next few months in this ministry. We're going to be strengthening the way we monitor the ministry's work performance. We're going to be building a new framework for monitoring the progress of child death reviews, including reporting progress to the ministry's executive. A recruitment process is underway, which will lead to additional staff in the regions and headquarters in order to speed up the process of completing reviews and monitoring performance.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Vancouver-Kingsway has a further supplemental.

**A. Dix:** Well, we've certainly come a long way since last fall, when the minister was saying there were no problems with respect to child protection and there was no need for changes to child death reviews. The minister has been absent without leave for a long time, and so has the government.

My question is to the acting Premier, because clearly in these fundamental questions of direction for the ministry it is the Premier's office that is making the decisions. How long will the government allow the Minister of Children and Family Development to twist in the wind while front-line social workers are abandoned to deal with a crisis in child protection and children's services?

**Hon. S. Hagen:** I'd like to continue on the list of proposals we have that we'll be putting into practice over the next several months. I'm very proud of the work that's been done by the ministry, and I'm very proud of the work that's been done by the people who work in the ministry. As I travel the province and talk to front-line social workers, I always ask them: why do you do this job? You know what they say? "Because we care about people." I wish I could say the same about my critic across the floor, because I think he's more interested in making political headlines than accomplishing something for the good of the province.

Here are some other initiatives that are underway or that will be underway shortly: developing, mentoring and training programs for case reviews; implementing a new management information system to track and share information relating to fatalities, critical incidents and recommendations. These will be utilized by not only the ministry staff in my ministry but, in addition, in the coroner's office and the office of the child and youth officer. MCFD will be adding additional staff to its FOI unit to improve timeliness of response to requests while protecting privacy and confidentiality as required by law to maintain our openness and accountability.

**J. Kwan:** Let us be clear. The Premier eliminated the Children's Commission. The Premier allowed the Doug Walls scandal to happen right under his nose. The Premier slashed the ministry's budget to an unsustainable level, and now the Premier's office is restructuring the ministry's senior-level bureaucracy.

I'd like to ask the question to the Deputy Premier. Can the Deputy Premier explain why the Premier's office has pushed the top bureaucrats out instead of taking responsibility for the ongoing crisis that everybody sees, with the exception of this minister and this government, which they have created at the cabinet table? Take political responsibility now — to the Deputy Premier, please.

**Hon. S. Hagen:** What a classic example of pontification and manufacturing myths. That's what we just heard. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that we have an independent child and youth officer. We have an independent coroner's office, and that's evident to everyone who is reading the newspapers these days.

[1435]

You know, there's no reorganization going on in the Ministry of Children and Family Development. What's happened is that we've had a change in personnel in two areas. We're fortunate that we had people in the ministry who could fill those positions. I have full confidence in the people that we've put in those positions, and I know they will continue to do the good work that they've been doing over the last several years.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has a supplemental.

**J. Kwan:** Talk about sticking your head in the sand. This is about government accountability and responsibility. The Premier was big on that once upon a time, when he was in opposition. Now no one on that side of the House seems to be prepared to own up to the failings of the government's actions in the Ministry of Children and Family Development, for their poor decisions and for the mismanagement of that ministry.

To the Deputy Premier, who is second in command within the executive council: if the Minister of Children and Family Development is not in charge, which is clearly the case — he has no idea what is going on within his ministry — and the Premier won't take responsibility, who is the public supposed to hold accountable on this critical issue around the safety of children who are very vulnerable in this province?

**Hon. S. Hagen:** The member opposite talks about organizational changes. How dare she talk about organizational changes. Under the NDP government, within a five-and-a-half-year period the Ministry of Children and Families went through three major organizational changes, six ministers and four deputy ministers. I find it incredible that she would even raise the question.

The ministry is in place. I'm accountable to the people of British Columbia. We have great people in that ministry from the front-line social workers to the top in the deputy minister's office. I have full confidence in them, and we will continue to provide services and keep children safe and healthy in British Columbia.

**R. Austin:** On many an occasion I have answered the phone in the middle of the night on a Friday or Saturday to listen to front-line social workers who are asking, pleading, for a bed for a child that night. Many times I have wondered what it would be like for them to call up the minister.

On September 19 last year, the minister blamed a single social worker and a 49-cent stamp for the tragic events in Port Alberni. Since then, the government has blamed everyone but themselves for the ongoing crisis in child protection. I would like to know who the Deputy Premier blames now for the minister being so terribly out of the loop and uninformed.

**Hon. S. Hagen:** I find it somewhat incredible that a former social worker would stand up in this House and

complain about the Ministry of Children and Families. We depend on 4,400 workers in the ministry to make the system work. I take my hat off and compliment social workers for the job that they do. I have travelled the province and met with social workers from one end of the province to the other, the four corners of the province, and I tell you I have so much respect for what they do. I would not be able to do the job that they do, because I don't have that training. But I really respect what they do, and I hold them up as examples of great citizens because they do a tough job. Our job is to make sure that they have the resources to do their work, and that's exactly what we're doing.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member for Skeena has a supplemental.

**R. Austin:** Let me be clear. I am in no way blaming front-line social workers for this crisis. I am blaming this government for this crisis, who imposed a 23-percent cut on a system that was already under the gun. The truth is that there is no one left to blame but the Premier.

[1440]

Clearly, the minister doesn't know what's going on, and there's no point asking him questions. The Premier has left him uninformed and irrelevant. Will the acting Premier act now, today, and finally restore some government accountability in the Ministry of Children and Family Development?

**Hon. S. Hagen:** It's obvious to me, and it must be obvious to everyone in this House and everyone watching, that that party is way more interested in trying to score cheap political points than in addressing what we're trying to accomplish in the Ministry of Children and Family Development. I can tell you again that the people who work in the ministry do a phenomenal job. I take my hat off to them. They do an incredible job for the people of British Columbia.

If you look at some of the successes that we've had over the last four or five years.... The number of children in care has dropped by 11 percent. The number of children being adopted into forever families has doubled. I mean, those are things to be proud of.

Are the challenges great? Sure they are. These are some of the toughest issues that any government ministry deals with. But I'll tell you something. The people in the ministry are working hard to get where we need to get to, to keep the risk low. When we talk about children and youth at risk, we want that risk be as low as it can possibly be to make sure that British Columbians can look at the system and say: "That's a system that will keep children safe."

**M. Farnworth:** This is not about front-line staff or ministry staff, who everybody in this House knows do a terrific job. This is about accountability — ministerial accountability. This is about the director of child protection, perhaps the most sensitive post in the ministry after the minister. That individual is gone, and the minister did not even know it. The minister didn't even know it. Clearly, the minister is not in the loop.

What we've seen is a history of involvement by the Premier's office in this ministry time after time. So my question is to the Deputy Premier. Will she and the cabinet either insist that the Minister of Children and Families be brought into the loop or get a new minister who has their confidence and will be brought into the loop?

**Hon. S. Hagen:** What the member opposite has just suggested is political interference in a process that is established by policy for civil servants. If you would take the time to go to the website, you would see that there actually is a policy that is in place and comes under the public sector agency. It lays out the opportunities for employees. If they want to talk about their advancement or want to talk about different jobs, they can do that. But they do it in confidence. It would be totally inappropriate for me or any other minister to be knowledgeable about that.

I can say this. As soon as my staff felt that it was appropriate for me to know, I was told. It would be totally inappropriate for a minister to be involved in that. This policy has been in place at least since 1996, so it shouldn't be unknown to some of the members opposite.

#### COMPLIANCE OF COPEMAN CLINIC WITH FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATION

**D. Cubberley:** Yesterday the Minister of Health left the House and told the media that he had no interest in introducing user fees for public health care — no interest. Inside the House he said he's always given an honest response to questions about the Copeman clinic.

My question to the minister: will he explain honestly why he's allowing the Copeman clinic to charge user fees for preferred access to doctors?

[1445]

**Hon. G. Abbott:** It's discouraging to see how really bare the NDP question period cupboard is already, and we're only the second day into the session here — pretty bare.

I answered the member's question yesterday. I'll answer it again today. We have advised Mr. Copeman that it is our view, based on the advice that we have received, that his fees for services that are insured under the Canada Health Act are out of bounds with the Canada Health Act and the Medicare Protection Act in British Columbia. We have made that abundantly clear to Mr. Copeman.

Mr. Copeman, to his credit, has made some adjustments over time to his website, to his promotional materials, to his business plan. He needs to make more if he hopes to be in compliance with the federal and provincial statutes that govern the operation of clinics in this province. That is entirely clear, and I hope the member understands it.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Saanich South has a supplemental.

**D. Cubberley:** That is slightly less vague than the minister has been up to this point, but only slightly.

The minister has persistently refused to say that the billing practices of the Copeman clinic violate the Canada Health Act. Recently, in fact, he said the annual fee does not appear to be a problem, after Mr. Copeman rolled his enrolment fee into his annual fee. Legal opinion says it's a problem. Public opinion says it's a problem. Common sense says it's a problem.

Yesterday the minister said: "No user fees." So today will he state clearly in the House that the Copeman clinic's user fees for preferred access to doctors violate the act and that they will not be allowed in British Columbia?

**Hon. G. Abbott:** We'll work on this some more. The member is slowly picking up on the nuances in my responses, and that's encouraging. The enrolment fee, as I advised when I was asked.... If the enrolment fee is for insured services, it clearly is out of compliance with the statutes. If, as Mr. Copeman did.... He eliminated the enrolment fee, and he combined it with the annual fee. That, in our view, is still out of bounds if it is for insured services. Again, there are insured services under the Canada Health Act. There are non-insured services under the Canada Health Act. He can charge whatever fee he wishes for non-insured services. For insured services he is out of compliance if he is setting up a barrier to public access to those services.

I don't know how much clearer we can be on this point. We look forward, actually, in the weeks and months ahead to hearing from British Columbians on a range of issues. I know the member opposite and his leader and the New Democrats don't look for any kind of political or other advice in respect of the future of the system. We do.

#### QUALITY OF CLEANING AND FOOD SERVICES AT HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

**M. Sather:** My question is to the Minister of Health about the disastrous state of cleaning services and food services in our hospital. My office has been inundated with calls since the implementation of rethermalized food at Ridge Meadows Hospital and the adjoining Creekside and Alouette seniors facilities. Seniors are refusing to eat this unpalatable food — eggs shipped in a mushy, greyish mass from Toronto and Buffalo; sausages swimming in grease that relatives have to towel off and try to feed to their loved ones.

[1450]

These seniors do not have the opportunity to eat fresh vegetables and fruit made in British Columbia, which our Premier would like us to partake of. In fact, the food they're having to eat is worse than the food that's served at the local jail. What is the minister going to do now to ensure that these seniors are able to eat the real food that the member opposite referred to earlier? What will he do now for them?

**Mr. Speaker:** Minister of Health, I hope you can stay with the brevity of the remarks.

**Hon. G. Abbott:** I'll do my best. Occasionally I try to be comprehensive in my answers. I appreciate it. I'll try to be a little briefer.

We are concerned about the quality of food in our hospitals. I think we drive for continuous improvement in all aspects of health services in our hospitals and at times in the food, and continuous improvement is needed in the area of food. I don't know of the specifics around the facility the member refers to, but I can advise the member that for the first time in the history of this province, the province will be undertaking provincewide, comprehensive third-party audits of food quality, food safety, food nutrition and patient satisfaction in reviewing food services across this province. So you might say, Mr. Speaker: how would that compare to during the NDP's time? We don't know because the NDP never asked the question.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows has a supplementary.

**M. Sather:** Well, the cleaning services in our hospital, unfortunately, are no better than the food services. The minister will recall, I'm sure, the unfortunate incidents last fall of women at Surrey Memorial Hospital who contracted severe infections after their admissions there.

One of those women is my constituent Kim Garbutt. Ms. Garbutt was readmitted four times to hospital after contracting her serious infection. That followed with a 25-day stay in hospital, after which she was discharged with a catheter to her heart. She's still suffering from severe pain and ongoing loss of functioning.

To make matters worse, her disability has been denied by this government. Ms. Garbutt is suffering as a result of the disastrous experiment in privatizing hospital cleaning services, and this government is responsible. What steps will the government take to ensure that Ms. Garbutt receives the services she needs?

**Hon. G. Abbott:** It would be inappropriate for me to comment on the specific constituent case that the member raises. I don't believe he has provided that case file to my office. If he does, I would be pleased to follow up on it for him. I know that a number of the members on the opposite side have advanced case files to us, and we have followed up on them — I think generally to their satisfaction.

I'm always concerned when I hear issues about cleanliness in hospitals or any other public facility. Again, for the first time we have as a government, through the health authorities, already undertaken comprehensive audits around the cleanliness of facilities across the province. We know they're not perfect. Some are closer to perfect than others. But we are demanding continuous improvement in all of those health facilities across this province.

[1455]

#### CLOSING OF ACUTE CARE BEDS AT MERRITT HOSPITAL

**H. Lali:** We had a 16-bed hospital in Merritt before 2001. Then this Liberal government comes along and

without warning unilaterally cuts eight of those beds. My question is for the Minister of Health. Will the Minister of Health now admit that it was a terrible mistake to cut 50 percent of the beds at the Merritt hospital? Will the minister explain to the people of the Nicola Valley how cutting eight of 16 beds in Merritt is improving access to health care?

**Hon. G. Abbott:** I thank the member for his question. The number of acute care beds that are available in any facility is something that is managed by the health authority. In this case, the Interior Health Authority has, as they do with all facilities across the health region, looked very carefully at the demand, at the ongoing capacity patterns and so on. They make decisions in respect of that.

I have reviewed the Merritt situation with the Interior Health Authority. They are certainly satisfied that they are managing to the appropriate demand and appropriate capacity, and I think the Interior Health Authority does a very good job.

The other thing that the member might like to note, if he wants to balance the record in the next supplemental, is that in fact health care is also alternative levels of care. In Merritt and the Nicola Valley there have been very substantial investments made by this government and by the health authority to ensure that we do have appropriate assisted-living and residential care for the citizens of Merritt and area.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Yale-Lillooet has a supplemental.

**H. Lali:** I'd like to know where the Minister of Health is getting his information because the IHA clearly state that they're running a corporate model and that in order to get increased funding, it is the ministry's responsibility.

It is a fact that the Premier and the Liberal government cut 50 percent of the acute care beds in the Nicola Valley hospital. It is a fact that the Premier's cuts to the Nicola Valley hospital are hurting seniors and other patients in the valley.

It is a fact that Mr. Gordon Cox, a World War II veteran who risked his life for this country, had to lie on a stretcher in a hallway for 18 hours because the bed he needed had been cut by the Premier and this uncaring Liberal government.

My question is to the Minister of Health. Will the minister finally, finally gather enough courage and tell Mr. Cox that the Liberals' cuts to beds and health care services were a big mistake? Will the minister finally stand up and show some heart and prove to my constituents that he actually does care about patients and immediately reinstate a 16-bed facility at the Nicola Valley hospital?

**Hon. G. Abbott:** As we noted yesterday in question period, the Conference Board of Canada has found, after a very comprehensive examination, that British Columbia in fact has the best overall health care system in Canada.

I believe that the reason why British Columbia is number one is that we have, directly and indirectly, about 120,000 people who work in the health care system, who work very hard and care about the patients they serve.

The Interior Health Authority does a great job for the citizens in the interior. It's unfortunate, I think, that this member — and it's an exception among his colleagues — has chosen not to work with the Interior Health Authority. I think that's unfortunate because the Interior Health Authority is doing great work, and they are providing great services to the people of the interior health region.

[End of question period.]

### Orders of the Day

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I call continued debate on the Speech from the Throne.

### Throne Speech Debate

*(continued)*

**D. Hayer:** I will continue with my response to the throne speech. The Speech from the Throne highlighted a sweeping plan to modernize the Surrey Memorial Hospital.

[1500]

Today, during Multiculturalism Week, I would like to introduce to you again two guests in the gallery today who are on the front line of the hospital outreach program for the Indo-Canadian community. Jas Cheema is the manager of diversity services at Surrey Memorial Hospital. Jas helps make health care more understandable and accessible by educating physicians and employees on a cross-cultural basis; attending events to help build understanding; informing the South Asian community on issues of hospital services and health care in general; organizing a health fair for the diverse South Asian community; and raising awareness of programs that can help families in early childhood education, parenting, sexual assault prevention and hospital services.

Also in the gallery today is Simrita Johal-Virk. Simrita is a senior media relations consultant for Fraser Health. She works with the health professionals to identify and support them in media relations opportunities. Her position is the first of its kind in British Columbia's health authorities. She draws on her knowledge of the Indo-Canadian community to spot issues, and she also helps to translate information about Fraser Health programs and services to deliver them where and when they are needed.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

Please join me in recognizing the work of Jas Cheema and Simrita Johal-Virk in cross-cultural and in building bridges of knowledge and understanding within and beyond the Fraser Health Authority. They

set a great example for us in British Columbia since we are such a diverse community.

Madam Speaker, as I was saying before, I'm always reminded that the quality of life of my constituents comes first, be it in health care, education, safety, social programs or transportation issues. That is why I want to say again that I was thrilled a week ago to participate in the Gateway project announced by our Premier and the Minister of Transportation.

This multi-billion-dollar project will see the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge; the widening of the freeway from Vancouver to Langley; the creation of the North and South Fraser perimeter roads; and the upgrading of a number of interchanges and overpasses in Surrey, New Westminster, Burnaby, Vancouver and Langley, as well as in my riding of Surrey-Tynehead.

The importance of this program going forward is paramount. My Surrey-Tynehead constituency office is located in Fleetwood, only a few kilometres away from the Port Mann Bridge. Yet it takes my constituents almost one hour to get to this bridge from my office. Almost anywhere else in British Columbia that distance could be travelled in less than five minutes.

When my constituents in the Fraser Heights area, which has over 18,000 population, go shopping across the freeway to Guildford or Fleetwood, it takes them 45 minutes to go there. Anywhere else in B.C. for the same distance it would only take five minutes or so. This is what my constituents face every day.

This Gateway project is needed now. It is important to replace traffic infrastructure that is more than 40 years old, infrastructure that was designed and built when the lower mainland had less than half the population it has today. If you take a look at the city of Surrey, it is the second-largest city in British Columbia now, and it's going to be the largest city in British Columbia very soon. The population of the lower mainland is growing faster than anywhere in Canada.

We've talked about developing trade and commerce through our ports, but unless we can move trucks, traffic and containers east and west quickly and efficiently, our prosperity and environment will be compromised.

There are a few people in Vancouver and Burnaby and some MLAs on the NDP side who don't want people from south of the Fraser River to have a good and safe quality of life by having a good transportation system. I'm sorry to hear that. I was hoping they would all support the lifestyle they were used to on the north side of the river for people on the south side of the river, because we are the ones who are providing a lot of money to help them. They have two SkyTrain lanes and a lot of buses there.

[1505]

To illustrate how bad most people consider the traffic tie-ups, there was a billboard along the freeway in Abbotsford promoting satellite radio. The slogan was: "Two million songs, enough to get you across the Port Mann Bridge —" two million songs and \$1.5 billion in revenues every year lost to the gridlock, to the traffic jams and to extra pollution in our air. Our health

care is being affected negatively while you're stuck in the traffic from Langley to Vancouver on Highway 1, with time lost away from your family, your friends and your work.

We need those roads and bridges, and we need them as soon as possible, because the Asia-Pacific trading partners aren't interested in 40-year-old infrastructure. That's what we want to do: increase our trade with the Asia-Pacific so our interior and heartlands and everywhere else can prosper and keep on prospering with our natural resources. The South Pacific and Asia want us to use today's technology, today's speed and today's efficiency, and they want to deal with a government and a province that looks to and plans for the future, not one in the past.

As I said earlier, this throne speech contains at least 67 dynamic and vibrant promises for the future of British Columbia. I can't in the time allotted cover all of them, but I would like to touch on one last issue: working towards tough new minimum sentences for drug dealers, traffickers and criminals, as well as immediate extradition of foreign drug traders, traffickers and dealers. My constituents are constantly telling me that we need to crack down on crime and that we need minimum sentences for the violent criminals. With this throne speech we are doing just that, and we will continue to do that until our neighbourhoods and families are safe and happy places as they should be, as they are supposed to be for all British Columbians.

**C. Trevena:** Madam Speaker, in the throne speech and over the last few days we've heard a lot about transformative change and big leaps for B.C. society. Now, I have to admit that "transformative change" sounds something like spin doctors' midnight musings. After all, can you transform something and not change it? But why accuse the government of tautology when there's so much more that we can concern ourselves with in this throne speech for the coming session?

There's all the transformative change going into health care — the spectre of privatization, I fear, is very much there. I have lived in a mixed health care system, one that the Premier and the Minister of Health are going to visit in the UK. "Mixed" there means two-tiered. There is a public system, the National Health Service, which right-wing governments have eroded through a lack of commitment. For those who can pay, there's the private sector — a private sector that covers everything from checkups through to major surgery. This two-tiered system means, depending on the government of the day, that there is a lack of commitment to the accessible, public, universal health care system.

It was with delight when I came to Canada that I discovered there could be a true public health system, where you're not confined to a level of service by what you can pay. Sadly, this government thinks that for the patients to pay is the right route. I'm not sure that people who are already seeing some of the effects of the back-door privatization are going to be encouraged by what we've been hearing over the last few days — those who already now have to pay for chiropractors

or massage therapy, or those seniors who are already struggling with increased charges.

Yes, this throne speech does acknowledge our aging population. One in seven B.C.ers are seniors now, and one in four in another generation will be seniors, but seniors now are not happy. I have to admit I've lost count of the number of seniors and their family members who have come into my office or written to me about their inability to afford to both eat and buy the drugs they need, or to heat their homes and get the medication they have to buy. These are choices which are being made in the homes of seniors — of people who have worked hard in this province and for this province and for this country. These people are being degraded by the transformations that are happening in our society.

[1510]

There has been no transformation in long-term care. It's still not close to home for too many families, and seniors can't wait forever for promises to be kept. Families cannot wait.

The Speech from the Throne is full of rhetoric and platitudes and is of little substance. It talks of creative communities and people making the most of their potential. But I'd like to ask the government this: how can this happen when one child in four is living in poverty, when more than 200,000 children are in poverty? That's the size of a city, the number of poor kids in B.C. — one child in four. This is shameful. It is outrageous.

Even if this figure didn't put us at the bottom of our country's rankings, we should all be appalled by it. It's bad enough that nationally we still have a child poverty level of 17 percent six years after we were supposed to have eradicated it. In 1989 there was a federal vision to end child poverty. Here in B.C. we've seen the largest increase in child poverty. Child benefits have gone up, and the child poverty rate has also gone up.

I allude to Britain again. It was child poverty which drove Dickens to write some of his most compelling books, which helped bring social changes in Britain. It made people aware of the inhumanity of a supposedly civil society that does not look after those members who really are its most vulnerable. That was more than 150 years ago.

Now in British Columbia this government's transformations aren't helping those who have been pushed to our society's edges. Those people are insulted with the offer of free socks or a travel mug if they sign onto a system which ends up costing them.

What do their kids get? Their kids are likely among the 24,000 across the province who rely on food banks. There's a 42-percent increase in the number of children who are using food banks. The fact that we readily accept that there will be food banks in our communities is bad enough. The fact that we accept that people will not earn enough to put food on the table and will have to rely on donated jars of peanut butter or bulk pasta.... You have to ask yourself: where are those five fruits and vegetables that the bench opposite — the government — wants us all to eat when you rely on food handouts? But then we compound this with be-

nign neglect by acknowledging that more than 24,000 kids rely on their help.

Maybe these kids are the ones who slip into the adult soup kitchens. About ten kids a week eat a free meal at St. Vincent de Paul in Prince George. You might think that's not many, but isn't one child who needs a free meal in a rich society like ours, in a golden decade, one child too many?

One of the government's golden goals is for health. Obesity is the issue of the month, but will this government recognize that children in disadvantaged neighbourhoods are twice as likely to be obese as their peers in wealthier areas? Healthy food — those fruits and veggies, the multigrains and whole wheats — costs more. People on a low income cannot afford this, and they and their children suffer. Their kids suffer in everything from the ability to concentrate at school and learn through to ongoing health problems as adults.

One in four children in our province is living in poverty — twice as many among aboriginal children. Where is the commitment to those children in this throne speech? What new relationship is this government offering those young people? Yet the government goes blithely on in the throne speech talking about healthy living and equal opportunity to benefit from the knowledge economy.

[1515]

Again, I ask: how can a kid who is hungry, who is living in an overcrowded or substandard home benefit from the knowledge economy? I guess the statistic of one child in four — and I do repeat this because I think it is shameful; I think it is something we should all be fully aware of — didn't make it into the throne speech because the figure was released at the end of last year. We were heading home or going on our holidays, perhaps to Mexico or the Caribbean, perhaps further afield to places where the poor are visible — where it's not only the homeless on the streets, as we see here in B.C., but also children begging. That, perhaps, is the only child poverty that members opposite recognize.

We have a rich society. The B.C. economy is booming. We hear this often enough. We have a golden decade. We don't have child poverty. Oh, yes, we do.

Like in the developing world, the parents of these poor kids work. They work desperately hard so their kids can have a chance — the same chance they should be receiving anyway. Parents are working at two, often three, low-paying jobs. A person would have to work 40 hours a week every week of the year, 52 weeks, earning about \$9.60 an hour just to make it to the poverty line in Vancouver. The minimum wage is \$8 an hour, and the so-called training wage is \$6 an hour. It doesn't take much to realize there is a discrepancy here. If you've got to work without a break at \$1.60 more than the minimum wage to make it to the poverty level, there is something fundamentally wrong.

How are people expected to survive and to bring up families in this glowing golden decade when they are condemned by minimum-wage levels to live in poverty? These are the parents who are not on welfare.



On welfare the situation for families is also awful. A single parent is excused from the job search requirements on welfare until his or her child is three. At that magical age, I suppose the government believes they are capable of looking after themselves, because there isn't quality affordable child care available. There's no commitment by this government to child care. So a single parent with a toddler has to try to find work and hope that his or her child will be well looked after in an available child care space.

People are struggling to survive in this golden decade. We have people who are on minimal levels of welfare, where \$325 is supposed to provide clean, safe shelter. What is offered in the throne speech? A change in employment programs. How about instead ensuring that all people on income assistance get a living level of subsistence and access to education — not job training programs but to education? Isn't one of the other great goals of the golden decade literacy? How can people enter the workforce and sustain jobs without assistance in getting an education? Education, and not training placements for which companies reap large rewards. Education can help people leave the cycle of minimum-wage paid work and earn enough to invest in their children, in their children's food, in clothes, in school supplies, which — Madam Speaker, as I'm sure you well know — schools no longer provide for free.

It would also help those families if this government ended the clawback of national child benefit funds from those people on assistance trying to raise their children. A single parent with a child living on welfare here has a total income of \$13,778. That is \$11,541 below the poverty line. A couple with two children would receive \$18,258. That's \$19,533 below the poverty line in Vancouver.

[1520]

Let me quote some statistics from the very much non-political Dietitians of B.C., who have looked at the cost of eating in this province and have found that a family of four who are on income assistance will be short \$93 on food — food alone — and that a single parent who has two children will be short \$26. People short of money to buy food — one of the very, very basic necessities, a human right.

People are being condemned to live in poverty and to bring up their kids in poverty. So much for this golden decade.

I am very pleased to see in the throne speech that this government hasn't closed its mind to exploring new ideas and to looking elsewhere for examples of change which might benefit us here. Perhaps the Premier should take his Minister of Employment and Income Assistance with him on his European tour. He would find some very interesting information. The UK's child poverty rate — still too high — is just over 15 percent. France's child poverty level is 7.9 percent; Sweden, 4.2 percent; Norway, 3.4 percent. Ours is almost 24 percent.

Governments in Europe get involved to bring down the levels of child poverty. Maybe they see child poverty as unacceptable.

Tens of thousands of people in B.C. are poor, and their kids are poor. What does this throne speech offer? It offers transformational shifts which will lead people to living healthfully, because as the throne speech says: "The best way to assure our children lead healthy lives is to give them a strong start in life."

I know I am not alone, Madam Speaker, in hearing the echoes of cynicism here. I know that others will hear the government's words and then look at its actions. A government that sits complacently by while one in four of its children, this province's future, starts life in poverty is a government which simply does not care. This is a government that has no vision for B.C. and which does not include all our people.

**Hon. B. Penner:** I rise to speak in response to the throne speech that we heard two days ago, but first I'd like to thank the Speaker for the incredible hospitality that she showed Members of the Legislative Assembly and the staff in this building by providing a very delicious lunch. Please join me in a warm round of applause for the Speaker.

[Applause.]

I did send you a note a few moments ago asking if we could make that a weekly feature of the Legislature. I think that would be well received by all members here, although it would be an incredible challenge to you and your family, I'm sure, to be here every week.

The Speech from the Throne that we heard a few days ago lays out a vision for transformation in the province. In many ways the transformation has been underway for a number of years. In fact, ever since the election in 2001 we've seen incredible transformation in British Columbia.

We've gone from having the worst-performing economy in the entire country to being number one. That is transformation. We've seen in the last four or five years that we've gone from having net out-migration from British Columbia to other parts of the country — including Saskatchewan, which befuddles all of us, I think — to actually seeing people coming back to British Columbia, choosing British Columbia as a place to make their future, to find a career, to raise their families, to look for hope and opportunity and to build success for their families.

In the late 1990s I was a member of the opposition, watching as the NDP government of the day forced British Columbians to look for their future outside the boundaries of British Columbia. That was very dismal, and that's why that whole decade became known as the dismal decade of the 1990s.

Now we see the opposite. We've got people moving back to British Columbia, back to the constituency that I have the honour to represent, Chilliwack-Kent. They're people who just a few years ago couldn't imagine finding opportunity here in British Columbia, finding a chance to place their roots and build a future right in Chilliwack-Kent and in the province of British Columbia.

[1525]

It's really remarkable to hear some of the comments from the NDP opposition in response to the throne

speech. What a contrast. They're afraid of transformation. They're afraid of any change. They're afraid of looking for new ideas. It's true: sometimes change can be scary. But the alternative can be much worse.

I'm reminded of a story years ago of a book that I read about the Shackleton expedition to the Antarctic and how that incredible leader, who's now recognized as having a lot of vision and courage, had to make a very difficult decision: whether to take the chance of embarking on a mission on a couple of rescue boats to escape another winter that was coming and probably certain death in six or eight months; or to get on those boats, take the chance and travel across the oceans near Antarctica, 800 miles off the coast of Argentina, and look for land.

The safe thing might have been just to wait and hope that maybe, against all odds, someone would come along and rescue them. Ultimately, people can look back, and they know what would have happened. No ships were in that area. If they had waited, the whole crew would have perished. They would have all died. It wouldn't have been immediate; it would have been in about eight months. But the captain, Shackleton, made the decision to embark on two wooden row-boats across the stormy winter seas near the Antarctic Ocean and head for land and take their chances.

They planned. They did the best they could to reduce their risks, but it was still a very risky proposition. The remaining crew that was with them survived. They made their journey successful because they came up with the best plan they could, and they took a chance. They had the courage to change, to transform their surroundings, from being stuck on a frozen continent and facing an incredible winter that was coming, with minus 40- or minus 50-degree temperatures plus windchill, to going for safer land. They did that because they had the courage to transform their surroundings, to transform their situation, to look at the best information and to make a decision and carry it through as best they could.

The vision put out in the throne speech is talking about a positive future. Again, I've highlighted some of the positive transformations we've seen over the last few years already in just four years or four and a half years since this government was sworn into office. And there are other changes we've seen. We've seen how we've gone to having the lowest unemployment rate in the recorded history of British Columbia.

I can't remember a time in my lifetime when I opened up the newspapers and read about an unemployment rate in British Columbia that was under 6 percent. It's just unheard of, and yet we'll hear no recognition of that from the members of the NDP, who claim that they represent working people. You'd think that they, of all people, would take an interest in the fact that working people now have more job opportunities than ever before in British Columbia, but you don't hear a word about it from the elected members of opposition. Yet they say they represent working people.

The fact of the matter, Madam Speaker, and I think you know this, is that British Columbia has led the

country in job creation for the last four years. That's an incredible record, and it's one that we should all be proud of.

The job is never done. There's always more work to do, and that's why the throne speech sets out some big challenges, asks some big questions and looks for ideas. You know, it's kind of shocking to see the opposition say, "I don't think you should ask those kinds of questions," or that maybe it's somehow dangerous to go out and talk to people and look for ideas.

In fact, I think about the only transformation I've seen from the NDP in the last little while is the transformation of their leader, who went from saying.... Her answer to everything is saying, "I don't want to make a decision, but let's consult some more," to: "Let's not consult around this idea of health care and whether we can change to make it better for British Columbia." That wasn't a very positive transformation, but granted, it was a transformation on the part of the opposition leader.

It's hard not to conclude that for the NDP, they really are living up to their initials: negative, destructive and pessimistic. They simply are afraid to ask those big questions, to ask people for their ideas, to see how we can make things better. We know that things are pretty good with our health care system in British Columbia. There's always room for improvement, but when the Conference Board of Canada does a comprehensive coast-to-coast analysis of health care systems in this country, and they conclude that nobody has a better health care system than right here in British Columbia, you know we're doing something right.

Now, I remember during the last election campaign and even since then the leader of the NDP opposition saying: "If we want health care solutions, let's look to Manitoba" — led by an NDP socialist government. "They know what they're doing with health care. Let's follow the Manitoba example."

[1530]

Well, guess what. According to the Conference Board of Canada and their comprehensive report released a couple of weeks ago, Manitoba ranks dead last in Canada in terms of their health care system. Frankly, that's not really the place where I'm hoping to go as a person representing Chilliwack-Kent or as a member of this government. That's not really my desire, my vision, for a health care system. I don't think it is the Premier's vision either.

While I appreciate that advice from the member of the opposition, saying: "Don't consult with anybody unless you go to Manitoba" — which has the worst health care system in the country according to the Conference Board of Canada — I don't think that's the best advice we can get. I think we need to look wider than just Manitoba. I think we need to look around the world for better ideas and figure out what might work for us and what might not work for us. Let's be open about it. Let's have a conversation. Let's put it on the table and see what would work better here in British Columbia, because there is always room to make improvements if you're willing to look for new ideas.

Speaking of new ideas, I want to talk a little bit about education too. I know that in our community we have a school district in Chilliwack where the student population is actually increasing. I know that's not the situation in many parts of the province, but in Chilliwack we have the challenge of coping with more students. That's a challenge, as it is a challenge for other school districts where they face a declining student enrolment.

In Chilliwack, to help meet the needs, we are building new facilities in our community. It's something that I and the member for Chilliwack-Sumas, the Solicitor General, are very proud about, because he took an active involvement in a project called the new G.W. Graham Middle School, which is now well under construction. It should be opening, I guess, in a couple of months — in time for September 2006. It's a fabulous new facility. It's state of the art, with a geothermal heating system to reduce energy costs. It's going to be held up, I think, as a model for other projects around the province in terms of energy efficiency but also in terms of offering a wider range of technological and other services for students and teachers, to make sure we have the best possible learning environment for our young people.

That took vision. Frankly, it took a lot of work on the part of the member for Chilliwack-Sumas as well as the local school board to pursue a vision to get the best value possible for that project and to pursue a creative procurement process which resulted in competing ideas in terms of the design.

I think the results speak for themselves already. The project's not done, but I drive by it on a regular basis on my way home, and I can tell you that it's going to be something that we can all be proud of — not just people in Chilliwack but people around the province. It is leading edge, state of the art, and it will provide a great educational service for our students for many, many years to come.

A few other things to note at the local level. Chilliwack Hospital has opened some additional beds. I think it's on the fifth floor. Throughout the 1990s under the NDP government, that facility was underutilized and mostly used for storage in terms of the fifth floor. We now have a number of new beds that have been opened up to help speed up the flow of people from the emergency room down at the bottom and to get better flow of patients throughout the facility. We've also opened on that floor — making use of some of that previously unused space — a new detox centre to help people who have particular substance abuse problems come to terms with what is holding them back and deal with it in a safe and healthy environment where they've got professional medical supervision to help them get over their addiction.

Those are a couple of areas that demonstrate that once you get your fiscal house in order, as this government has done, it allows you to make strategic investments that help to better things for the people of the province — not just people that are wealthy, as the members from the NDP would have you think, but for everyone: people who need drug addiction services;

people who need health care when they need it; or students who want to have a good quality education, a top-notch, quality education in the public education system.

There was more good news just a few days ago when the Minister of Education released a very comprehensive review, which I think has been done for the very first time in the province. That was a comprehensive review of class sizes in all the school districts in British Columbia. It's an incredibly tall order to go around and actually extract information about the thousands and thousands of different classrooms and to analyze that data. I'm proud to say that throughout British Columbia the vast majority of school districts are in compliance with our legislative requirements in terms of class size averages, but in Chilliwack we're even ahead of the provincial average in terms of keeping those class sizes down.

[1535]

I know that's something that can confound the members of the BCTF, or at least their leadership, because it's not quite in line with their message box, but I can tell you that for people in Chilliwack, it is seen as good news. It's something, again, where we need to recognize the good work there that's taken place with the leadership of the local elected school board. Both I and the member for Chilliwack-Sumas salute the work that has been done by the Chilliwack school board in terms of making sure that they make strategic choices and that they think about the best outcome for students.

As a result, we have seen that in Chilliwack we're in compliance with the provincially legislated class size averages. In fact, we're below. I think we have amongst the lowest class size averages of anywhere in the lower mainland. That's very significant. Although there's always more work to do and we look forward to the results of the Learning Roundtable and recommendations from Vince Ready coming forward in the next little while, I think that it's important to recognize the good work that's been done to date and to salute everyone in the education system, whether it's the trustees or the teachers, the parents and volunteers — everyone in the system. To date, good work has been done, and we're seeing the benefits.

I'd be remiss if I didn't also take time to acknowledge that all of this is being done and we can afford to do it because we have a thriving private sector economy — whether in the energy sector; the housing-construction sector; or in forestry, where people are facing challenges in terms of softwood lumber but are still contributing to our economy....

**Hon. S. Hagen:** Tourism.

**Hon. B. Penner:** We see tourism, for example, has been very strong, and we have creative marketing....

**Hon. P. Bell:** Agriculture.

**Hon. B. Penner:** Of course, in the upper Fraser Valley we can't forget about agriculture, which is still one

of the mainstays of our economy. All of that is contributing to economic success, giving people opportunities for good-paying careers and family-supporting jobs and providing government with the revenues to do the things that we need to do.

Whether it's policing services, protecting our environment and increasing our investment in the parks system as we've done over the last year or so, or any number of initiatives, all of those things require tax dollars. They require revenue.

The members opposite in the NDP seem to think that if you just don't have the tax revenue, it's no problem. Just go out and borrow it. That's their solution for funding government programs. I have to tell you that we saw the results of that approach in the 1990s.

That approach caused British Columbia's debt to more than double in just ten years. We went from having about a \$17 billion total debt in this province in 1991 to a \$34 billion debt in 2001, when voters finally turned them out of office. They left this province with a huge structural deficit. If their spending plans had been followed through on, it would have left us with a \$3 billion or \$4 billion financing gap, where we'd have to keep going out year after year and borrowing more money and then paying more interest on that borrowed money, which would force us to borrow more money in future years to pay for the interest on that additionally borrowed money.

**Hon. J. Les:** It sounds like a vicious circle.

**Hon. B. Penner:** That vicious circle, as the member for Chilliwack-Sumas points out, was put to a stop by the B.C. Liberal government after we were elected in 2001. That's a transformation. That tax-borrow-and-spend approach of the NDP was not sustainable, so we made a conscious decision. In fact, we were elected on a platform to get our financial house in order.

Choices are difficult. Change is difficult. I've talked about the challenges people face when they are confronted with having to make a choice or a change, but it was a change for the good because now we have a surplus budget. We can make those key strategic investments, and I've given you a few local examples. Whether it's a new, state-of-the-art school or few additions in a local hospital, including detox beds, we're in a situation where we can make those funding decisions for social services without incurring more debt for future generations. That, I think, is something to be saluted and celebrated, and that represents a significant transformation from what we saw in the 1990s.

While we're on the subject of talking about finances, I would like to point out that what we saw in the last couple of years, especially under the NDP, was a constant pressure to look for quick-term fixes without looking at the big strategic picture and making decisions for the long term. So what we've done with the throne speech, and we've heard it articulated by Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor, is set some big goals for ourselves. We did it last year with the throne speech and again in the fall. Now we're asking big

questions, strategic questions about the future of health care, education and other issues that are important to British Columbians.

As we asked that question, one of the things put forward as an idea included adding another element to the Canada Health Act, one of the principles of the Canada Health Act. The suggestion is that maybe we consider sustainability as one of the cornerstones of the Canada Health Act.

[1540]

How are we going to continue to pay for a top-notch health care system, one that the Conference Board of Canada says is number one here in British Columbia? Well, imagine all of our surprise when the first reaction from the Leader of the Opposition was that she didn't like the word "sustainability." She thought it was code for something else. I can tell you that as Environment Minister, I'm very interested in and very committed to the whole concept of sustainability. Frankly, it's something that I embrace. I was shocked — appalled, in fact — that the Leader of the Opposition would look askance at the concept of sustainability, whether it's in terms of financing public health care or in terms of maintaining our environmental integrity.

Here in British Columbia I think sustainability is key, so let me talk to you about some of the things we've done in terms of maintaining our environmental integrity and sustainability here. I'll start with one example that did get some attention, but it took place after the Legislature last sat in the fall, and we haven't had a chance to discuss it here yet. That's the decision that came down both from the Federal Court of Appeal of Canada as well as the backers of the project, and this is all relating to this proposed Sumas 2 energy project. You may remember, Madam Speaker, that the previous NDP government chose not to intervene — deliberately chose not to, despite being permitted to — in Washington State in order to speak up for British Columbia residents in the Fraser Valley and lower mainland against that proposed power project.

Now, it's true that that project was to have been based in Sumas, Washington, just outside our borders, but Washington State had a process where they said: "If you want to come and participate in our hearing process, you're more than welcome to." Despite being asked to participate by me and the members from Abbotsford and Matsqui and many thousands of British Columbia residents in the lower Fraser Valley, the previous NDP government chose not to. It chose not to intervene and take an official intervener status position at those hearings.

That then required many thousands of individual citizens to do that, and many of them signed petitions. Many hundreds actually travelled to Bellingham and other locations to participate in the hearings and did things that for many of them were way beyond their normal comfort level in terms of becoming involved as interveners in a quasi-legal process. That process went on for years.

The Premier of British Columbia, the then Leader of the Opposition, made an election commitment prior to

2001 that if a B.C. Liberal government were to be elected in 2001, we would, as a government, formally request intervener status in Washington State. That was a commitment that we made, and it's a commitment that we followed through on. We did intervene in Washington State, and we maintained that intervener role when the proponents went to the National Energy Board of Canada and began the regulatory process here seeking permission to build a power line.

I'm pleased to report that although we were not ultimately successful in Washington State with their regulatory process, we were successful with Canada's National Energy Board in getting a unanimous recommendation from them against SE2's request for a power line. When SE2 appealed that decision to Canada's Federal Court of Appeal, we were again successful. It was a unanimous decision, and frankly, it surprised many legal observers.

I was there at the courthouse when the decision was made essentially from the bench. We all thought that the Federal Court of Appeal panel would take weeks or months to render a decision. They did so verbally from the bench, I think sending a strong signal that the case marshalled by the province of British Columbia in partnership with local communities like Abbotsford and the Fraser Valley regional district and other environmental groups that joined in with us was compelling and that we had done our homework.

I'm very pleased to say, on behalf of Fraser Valley residents who are concerned about this issue, that the Federal Court of Appeal did reject SE2's application. SE2 still had the opportunity to seek leave to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada, and frankly, I expected them to do so, having invested as much time and effort as they had over the last six or seven years in pursuing this matter. I thought they would.

Imagine my delight and surprise when SE2 posted an item on their website on January 5 of this year indicating that they were pulling back on their project and would not be seeking leave to appeal the federal court decision, which means that that decision now stands and it's no longer appealable because they have missed their limitation period on seeking leave to appeal. We're also putting their project essentially in neutral in Washington State.

That's all very good news, but I do caution people in the Fraser Valley and others that while they essentially put their project in neutral, it could be slipped back into gear and perhaps accelerated at some future time. That's why the government of British Columbia has directed our legal counsel that we have on retainer in the Seattle area to keep an eye on this particular project, to monitor the situation and to let us know if SE2 attempts to go forward in Washington State.

[1545]

It is theoretically possible that they may seek to build power lines to connect their project in Washington State. It'd be a greater distance and a greater cost and would require, perhaps, some legal action to overturn a local ordinance in Whatcom County preventing such power lines, but that still remains a possibility.

That's why we are keeping an eye on SE2, but for now it certainly looks like that project is going nowhere in a hurry. That's in large measure due to the good work of the residents of the Fraser Valley. It's something that stands in stark contrast to the record under the previous NDP government, where they made a conscious decision not to intervene in Washington State in opposition to that project.

Speaking of the Fraser Valley and air quality, I just want to reflect on a report that came out late last fall, and it was more good news. It was a report that indicated that over the last ten years or more, air quality in the Fraser Valley and lower mainland has actually been improving. I know that runs counter to some people's personal perceptions or their understanding of things, but according to empirical evidence that's been collected over the last number of years, there has been an improving trend in terms of air quality in the Fraser Valley.

That doesn't mean we need to relax or allow things like SE2. What it does mean is we need to celebrate the success and recognize that measures that have been taken over the last number of years are providing some dividends to us and are resulting in improved air quality.

Air quality isn't some airy-fairy concept — pardon the pun — but in fact it translates into real impacts in terms of human health. I know individuals in the Chilliwack area, and I'm sure that my esteemed colleague the member for Chilliwack-Sumas does as well, who have been afflicted with asthma — or the children have — or they themselves have had to move from our area in the past because of poor air quality episodes that take place at certain times of the summer.

The good news is that we are seeing continued improvement. While additional improvement will be challenging, I think there are things we can do to try and keep the trend moving in a positive direction. Again, it's not something where you can say that the job is now down for now and forever and we don't have to think about it, but I do think we need to stop a moment to recognize that there has been progress and celebrate the fact that we're seeing some success, in order to give ourselves the encouragement to pursue more progress on that front.

Air quality is something that affects all of us, and some of us are more affected than others and are more sensitive to the particulates and other items that could make up air pollution. We have to recognize that and continue to strive for the best air quality possible in British Columbia.

In line with that, I'm pleased to reiterate that we're now into the second year of a \$2,000 provincial sales tax exemption for hybrid vehicles. If you haven't taken the opportunity to go out and buy yourself one of these vehicles, I encourage you to do so. I know that there are some colleagues of mine, including the member for Comox Valley, who have acquired one of these vehicles. He talked to me about these vehicles several years ago when he had one, I think, under a government lease. He persuaded me, and I went out and purchased

one personally back last March. I can tell you that I've been very pleased with its performance.

To help people make that leap from a conventional vehicle to a hybrid vehicle, last year our government introduced a \$2,000 maximum provincial sales tax credit. That's to help close the gap between the cost of a conventional vehicle and the extra price you pay for a hybrid, and it's worked. Prior to that tax exemption that we introduced last spring, I think there were something in the order of 1,500 or so hybrid vehicles on the roads in British Columbia. The last information I was given is that we're now closing in on the 4,000-vehicle mark in British Columbia.

More and more individuals are making the choice to move to hybrid vehicles in order to reduce the fuel consumption for their vehicles, to reduce emissions and I think, frankly, at times to have a more pleasurable drive. Certainly, if you're caught up in rush hour traffic, I find the fact that you can operate on battery mode rather than having your car idle the whole time makes the whole trip a little less stressful.

That two-year tax exemption.... We're now in the second year of it, so this is a message to members and people watching that this is a time-limited offer. I highly recommend that you take the time to consider it. If you're in the market for a new vehicle, take advantage of this \$2,000 incentive while it's available.

[1550]

We've also introduced a number of other tax incentives for people to consider other options, including taking the motor fuel tax off of the alternative fuel components of regular fuels — for example, biofuel. I'm pleased to say that this government has introduced a tax relief measure so that if you're purchasing a blend of biodiesel, it's actually cheaper at the pump than conventional diesel fuel.

I didn't know that until I pulled up to an opening of a biodiesel station in North Delta a couple of weeks ago, and there was the sign. It was clearly marked. There was the conventional price for diesel. I think it was 97 cents a litre or so. For a B20 — that is a 20-percent blend of biodiesel — the price was about one cent or one and a half cents per litre cheaper. It doesn't sound like a lot, but if you're a trucker and you're putting on a lot of miles, you're going to look for every opportunity to reduce your costs. I don't know if the science supports this, but anecdotally, operators tell me they find this product performs more quietly, and they believe it may have less wear and tear on the engine components than conventional diesel fuel.

We have a great opportunity here in British Columbia to grow that sector, to grow that fuel as we meet our transportation needs and to grow a local economy based on that fuel. I know already that the member for East Kootenay has been talking to me about a facility that is just reaching the commercialization stage near Fernie. It will be producing a biodiesel fuel to be blended into regular diesel. There are other entrepreneurs in the province looking at similar opportunities. There are currently, I believe, three retail outlets in the province where you can purchase biodiesel,

and you can run it in your regular vehicle without having to undertake major mechanical changes to your car. In fact, no changes are required if you run a blend of, let's say, 20-percent biodiesel.

Those are a couple of things where this government has shown leadership in providing incentives for people to make a choice that has less impact on the environment, and that's all about good stewardship. That's about a vision for the future, and it stands in stark contrast to what we saw during that dismal decade of the 1990s that I've already talked about.

Here are a few other things we've been able to do over the last little while. We've invested more than \$1 million in 146 air quality monitoring units around British Columbia, which helps give us more protection by more clearly identifying what the challenges are out in those different airsheds. What we've found is that not all the air situations are the same. Even where there are challenges, those challenges come from different causes.

Last summer I had the opportunity to visit Prince George and take a look at some new, state-of-the-art air quality monitoring equipment installed on the roof of the Ministry of Environment building. It will help us to determine not just what the level of particulate matter or other pollution is but, also, to try and determine what the root cause or source of that pollution is so that we can identify the industry, deal directly with that particular industry and find ways to reduce their pollution.

This and a host of other things indicate that we are looking forward to a brighter future. I look forward to discussing these and other topics in the weeks and months ahead.

**B. Ralston:** Madam Speaker, before I begin, let me congratulate you on your re-election. You obviously enjoy the confidence of the House, and I'm sure that will continue throughout this session.

I'd like to begin by first touching on some local issues. There are some recent changes to the political landscape in Surrey. I'd like to congratulate the incoming mayor Dianne Watts on her election as mayor of Surrey and to compliment the outgoing mayor Doug McCallum for his years of public service.

In the federal riding of Surrey North, formerly held by the late Chuck Cadman, an icon in Surrey and ultimately an icon in Canada, a new Member of Parliament was elected: Penny Priddy. I think she enjoys the unique distinction — I'm not sure; I haven't researched this thoroughly — of having served on the local school board and on the local city council, having represented Surrey in the provincial Legislature and now representing Surrey at the federal level. Certainly, she's familiar with all interjurisdictional issues that one can imagine, based on that experience.

[1555]

I also want to note, perhaps just in terms of local interest, a project that the Whalley business improvement association is working on in association with the Surrey city council, with the provincial government and ultimately with the federal government. We're

hoping to put together an initiative that will attract both federal and provincial support for a Surrey Solutions agreement. There is a Vancouver agreement, which began in 2001 and was renewed in 2005. I understand that the city of Victoria and a number of cities throughout the country have engaged in this tripartite process to seek solutions for local problems with the assistance of senior levels of government. That's a project that we're working cooperatively on and that I'm hoping will come to fruition shortly.

The other local issue I want to touch on is.... The Gateway project has been announced. While I don't propose to debate the Gateway project here, it is significant in my riding. There is an emerging local issue based on the map that describes the position of the second bridge at Port Mann. Judging from the diagram and the artist representations, it will head straight through a well-established neighbourhood known in Surrey as Birdland, basically because all the streets are named after birds. That's a neighbourhood that's been there for some 40 years, and I've already been contacted by a number of residents who are concerned about the implications for their properties, their homes and their future in that particular neighbourhood.

I have spoken with the Minister of Transportation and Highways, and I understand that he is prepared to receive submissions on that. Indeed, there are two public consultations — one on Saturday, April 8, and the other on Tuesday, April 11, both in Surrey — at which, I expect, those issues will be canvassed and neighbours will make their feelings known. I, perhaps, put the minister on notice to prepare to be able to respond to that. Given the assurances I've received thus far, I think he will be able to do that.

Now I want to turn to what the government has initiated in its Speech from the Throne: a debate about the future of medicare. I suppose this debate is really a continuing debate across the country and, with greater or lesser intensity, is frequently debated in all Legislatures, in the federal parliament and, indeed, internationally.

We on this side of the House welcome a debate on the future of medicare, but we begin with the premise that we should recognize that medicare is a major social accomplishment of Canada and of Canadians. A single-payer, state-run, tax-financed universal health program is superb and is one of the crowning achievements of public policy in this country. We welcome that debate.

Obviously, from the time of its introduction in the '60s, there have been amendments and changes to medicare — improvements and variations to accommodate local interests, new emerging technologies and other significant provincial interests. But that does not detract from the overall achievement of medicare as a significant social accomplishment in this country.

I also would begin by noting that members opposite have spoken to some extent about the aspersions cast on this side of the House, about a lack of understanding of the business case and about what was referred to as sustainability, which is basically the money

to run the system. There are significant business advantages, for Canadian firms and for those international firms who operate in Canada, to be derived from the existence and the operation of the public medicare program. That's a significant competitive advantage vis-à-vis our major trading partner, the United States.

Many American firms, when they come to restructure under pressure from market competition — one can think of the auto industry, in particular, and airlines, as another example — regard their financial flexibility as considerably constrained by what they refer to as the ongoing overhang of their privately financed, insured medical care obligations to their workers and their retired workers. Indeed, that's the issue in the restructuring of a lot of automakers. In particular, GM is facing that challenge.

[1600]

When this program is viewed in a broader context, one should never forget that it's widely regarded as being a significant business advantage. An efficient and universal public system relieves employers of the obligation to provide those benefits, although some employers will voluntarily or through collective bargaining provide supplementary benefits. But generally speaking, employers are not faced with that financial burden.

In addition, the existence of medicare across the country — obviously there are different coverages, but nonetheless there is substantial similarity in the coverage across the country, with some variations — encourages labour mobility. People in the United States, one often hears, are afraid to leave their job and go from one job to another because they're worried about losing their medical coverage. Indeed, people seek employment — perhaps in areas where they might prefer not to or in industries that might be outdated or undergoing significant change — simply because they want to obtain medical benefits. The economic benefits to the economy globally should not be underestimated when one comes to consider the benefits of medicare.

Particularly on this side of the House, I would say, we welcome this debate and the Premier's tour of various European countries. Now leaving aside the issue.... It's always difficult for people in political life to travel outside their jurisdiction to other places, and various commentators have noted the differing stances taken by political parties when people are in opposition and when they're government. But I'll leave that for another day. I would say, though, that all the countries that the Premier and his entourage propose to visit are countries with a significant tradition of either social democratic governments or strong opposition parties and strong labour movements. Many of the programs there were created postwar basically from the ground up and are the product of significant social achievement across many sectors in those societies.

Naturally, political power has ebbed and flowed in those countries, so there have been changes and some refinements — some good and some bad. I'd ask and I'd remind the Premier's entourage to look at it in that light.

Of course, there are cautions. Indeed, the European region of the World Health Organization recently — that's in 2004 — reviewed the evidence on private finance of health care in western European countries. The report concluded: "Evidence shows that private sources of health care funding were often regressive and present financial barriers to access. They contribute little to efforts to contain costs and may actually encourage cost inflation."

User fees in Sweden and private hospitals in Australia are sometimes used as examples by the proponents of private finance and privatization here in Canada. Objective examination of those policies has found that they would actually reduce equity, lengthen public sector wait times and substantially increase administrative overhead and overall cost. I hope that the Premier and his entourage, when they come to pursue this trip, will bear those thoughts in mind.

Obviously, there is still much room for innovation in the public sector here in Canada and indeed in British Columbia. Since I wouldn't want to be accused of being anything other than evenhanded, I do want to note with approval the recent decision by the government to follow up the lessons learned from the Richmond pilot project and its decision to create a new centre for surgical innovation at UBC hospital. This is the kind of focused, specialized clinic within the public sector that will make for better care for citizens throughout the province.

One could hope, perhaps looking from the Surrey perspective, that it had been located at Surrey Memorial rather than in the Premier's riding at UBC. But I suppose that decision was taken for other than those decisions, and UBC is generally regarded as a centre of medical excellence in any event.

[1605]

That focused approach in the public sector has been echoed in other provinces, and I suppose one wonders — and I think one has some regrets perhaps — why it takes the health care system so long to implement commonsense solutions such as this one.

Alberta, under Premier Klein, has recently initiated a similar focused clinic. In Ontario's Queensway surgical centre, which is part of the Trillium Health Centre, a public hospital, it's similar — again, publicly financed and publicly operated; again, a focused centre for surgical excellence.

In 2001 the Manitoba government purchased the Pan Am Clinic from its private sector owners. It now operates as a unit of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, and evidence there would suggest that the public sector delivery is superior. Indeed, the former owner, Dr. Wayne Hildahl, continues to operate it as the chief operating officer reporting directly to the CEO of the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority. He's quoted as saying he tries to run the clinic with an eye to the bottom line, just as when he owned the facility. He tries to use his resources as efficiently as possible so he can treat more patients. He notes the main difference now is that all surpluses have to go towards patient care. This is him being quoted: "Before the buyout

I could have taken the money and gone on vacation. Now the surpluses are used to treat more patients."

Again, a focused, specialized clinic operated publicly within the public system has produced substantial benefits to the public health system — as in Alberta, as in Ontario and as in the new centre for surgical excellence proposed here in British Columbia. These public clinics achieve the benefits of specialized innovation which some — and perhaps those on the other side of the House — would normally ascribe to the private sector, yet they reduce overall administrative costs and provide broader societal benefits. Even Premier Ralph Klein, speaking to the Canadian Club in Calgary on January 11, 2005 — and my research says that it's captured on video — admitted that sending patients to private clinics in his province will cost more than if the services were provided in the public sector.

Clearly, an open debate is welcome, but one would wish that this debate would be factually based and would take into consideration some of the things I have just suggested. I'm not so sure, though, when I come to read the Speech from the Throne, that this is indeed the intention of the government, as the words are expressed by the Lieutenant-Governor in the Speech from the Throne. At page 10 of the speech the question is posed — and lawyers would call this is a leading question; in other words, a question that suggests its own answer — and the question is: "Why are we so afraid to look at mixed health care delivery models, when other states in Europe and around the world have used them to produce better results for patients at a lower cost to taxpayers?"

That, to me, would suggest that rather than being an open debate and a voyage of pure inquiry, the conclusion has already been reached. People often travel with the view of looking for confirmatory evidence for predetermined conclusions, and that has a long political history both on the Left and on the Right, but one would hope that this is not the case in this instance.

I'm fearful that this assertion in the Speech from the Throne means that this trip will come back with a predetermined conclusion, one that has been predetermined by a cabinet committee and appropriately massaged by the public affairs bureau of the government. I hope I'm wrong, and doubtless we'll see in the weeks that unfold.

[1610]

There is much to learn in the course of such an inquiry, whether one conducts it as a research endeavour over the Internet or whether one travels there in person. The government, in its Speech from the Throne and speaking on the health sector, has rightly commended those women and men who do the work in the health care sector. I sincerely hope that that congratulatory spirit and sincere recognition of effort and commitment are reflected at the various bargaining tables where the government is meeting with public sector workers to discuss compensation.

I'm troubled somewhat, when I look at some of what the government has done, about a predisposition that the government has — again, not necessarily



evidence-based or scientifically based but simply based on a predisposition to private solutions. In this debate we've heard some discussion. I'm looking at my notes here. The member for Maple Ridge–Mission, in speaking of the Abbotsford hospital, which has been put forward as a P3 project — a public-private partnership, although "partnership" may be the wrong word to use in this particular case — is quoted in *Hansard* as saying: "The Auditor General has reviewed the process and found it to be completely acceptable."

I was in the Public Accounts Committee when we were given some presentations by members of the Auditor General's office and Mr. Blain from Partnerships B.C. and Mr. Marasco, the vice-president of Partnerships B.C. development. That conclusion that the member for Maple Ridge–Mission has drawn, while it may confirm his views, doesn't really fit with what the Auditor General's staff was saying there and indeed with the much more qualified answer that we heard from Mr. Marasco.

The difficulty in examining the assumptions underlying this endeavour of the hospital at Abbotsford is that the Auditor General did not, and was unwilling to, express a high level of assurance in what he called a future-oriented document. Because the work is prospective — in other words, the contract looks out over some 30 years — the best that can be said is that if all the assumptions are accurate, then at the end of 30 years one would be able to say that there is a benefit — and they were not able to quantify it, and they would prefer not to — to operating that way.

In my view, the fair conclusion from what was said was that it's a speculative idea that this particular partnership will have a net benefit in the long run. One will only be able to tell after some 33 years. Indeed, Mr. Marasco said in *Hansard*: "The true final measure of value for money can't be made until that concession agreement is actually completed." He says that based on evidence and research and experience today in the market, it looks very positive as predicted. He's expressing his emotion as positive, but there's no real objective reason that one will be able to assess this until the 33 years are over.

Given that predisposition, on very flimsy evidence, for private solutions, I worry and constituents of mine worry about what the government has in store and what predetermined conclusions they may have come to in the course of their internal discussions prior to this public announcement to begin this debate on medicare.

[1615]

One of the members in the debate — I believe it was the member for Port Moody–Westwood — quoted a Latin phrase and gave a very extended metaphor about climbing a mountain. But the Latin phrase that I would urge upon the Legislature is *ciu bono* — which is Latin for "to whose advantage would these changes be?" Obviously, there are lobbyists, suppliers and providers who see a business opportunity. There is nothing illegitimate or wrong about pursuing a business opportunity, but the decision for this Legislature is: is

that ultimately in the public interest? Is it good, prudent public policy to take the crowning achievement of Canadian social policy and cut it apart to benefit suppliers and providers who might make some money out of the process?

All the objective evidence in Europe, the United States and Canada would suggest that that may very well not be to the public advantage. It may not be to the public benefit at all. So when we have that debate, which we on this side welcome, that's the phrase that in my view one should be considering when weighing the policy options that are brought forward.

I want now to turn to one of the other areas in the Speech from the Throne that was addressed. There was some discussion and a strong preference and appetite for the new policy of the newly elected federal government for minimum sentences. Again, there seems to be a disparity between what the government is professing and its own previous actions. The government has certainly and, I think, with the public... The public sentiment is very strongly in favour of minimum sentences, particularly for drug trafficking. Although the Speech from the Throne says the "Criminal Code," I'm sure what they mean is the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

We on this side of the House don't oppose that direction, but within the recent legislative experience of this House, there was a policy under the Motor Vehicle Act for an offence called "driving while prohibited." The statute imposed a seven-day minimum jail sentence. That was formed as a result of good policy decisions, in many ways. If a person drives while they're prohibited from driving, they're not insured, and they've obviously committed other crimes that may make them a menace on the road. Traffic and pedestrian safety is an important public objective, but that was only a seven-day minimum.

What happened was that an amendment was introduced to abolish that seven-day minimum. The reason given in an analysis by a member of the media, which was particularly astute, was that the government was concerned to save the cost of the trial time. If people were confronted with the jail sentence, they were much more likely to want to take the matter to trial than to enter a guilty plea. Therefore, there was an additional cost and burden on the court system. They were concerned about the additional legal aid cost, because a person who is faced with the certainty of jail if convicted would automatically be entitled to legal aid. They were also concerned about the increased corrections cost. Those three things — cost savings — led to the government abolishing the seven-day minimum, and that was amended.

So when Her Majesty in the Speech from the Throne and when the government, speaking through her, say that they're in favour of minimum sentences, one wonders whether this is a considered response or simply an opportunity to echo public opinion without having thought through the consequences. Certainly, the demonstrated action of the government in dealing with the seven-day minimum was very contrary to

what they profess now in dealing with the obviously far more serious crime of drug trafficking. We will be monitoring that and seeing whether there is any follow-through on the side of the government.

In drawing to a close in this particular speech, I want to talk about what the government sees as its role over the next several years.

[1620]

Now, the government — and I expect we'll hear this in the budget next week — has talked about prosperity. Certainly there is prosperity, but the issue, in my view and the view of those of us on this side of the House, is that the government has an obligation to share that prosperity across all sectors of society.

When one looks at some specific actions or lack of action on the part of the government, there seems to be an unwillingness to share that prosperity with others. Take, for example, the free tuition fees for adult basic education. Those are people who have struggled, perhaps in earlier life, and have been unable to, for a variety of reasons — and usually good reasons — complete secondary school education. They were provided with the opportunity some time ago to take what's called adult basic education, sometimes commonly called upgrading, to complete their education. That program was a tuition-free program.

In 2001 that program, along with a number of other focused social programs, was abolished. Indeed, people in midstream in that program were simply forced to discontinue the program because they couldn't afford the fees. In addition, those people receiving social service benefits weren't permitted to take educational courses either. They were forced to discontinue.

That's perhaps a small example, but when one talks about the kind of dollars that are being proposed to be expended on capital infrastructure and some of the other big projects that the government claims it's launching, one should bear in mind that obligation to share prosperity across all sectors of society.

In my riding when I talk to people about the economy, their view quite often is that while others may be doing better, they have yet to experience much in the way of real benefits to themselves. Doubtless, the government will say that's a wrong-headed perception, but it's a very common perception among people that I meet.

The other area where the government really has not come up to the mark, in terms of preparing to share the skills and give opportunity to enter the labour market, is the apprenticeship program. It's startling and perhaps surprising that the province of Alberta has a far better, far more considered and far more productive apprenticeship system than the one here in British Columbia.

Indeed, the ITAC was dismantled in 2001, and the program that has replaced it — the absence of the apprenticeship counsellors to guide people through that program — has led to what everyone recognizes, whether it's in business, whether it's in labour, whether it's consumers who want to buy new condominiums, whether it's the....

**Deputy Speaker:** Member, could you conclude your comments.

**B. Ralston:** I'll conclude there and just say that those are the deficiencies in what the government has put forward, which we'll be monitoring on this side of the House.

**A. Horning:** Madam Speaker, first let me take this opportunity to congratulate you on your reappointment and thank you for today's reception. That reminds me of when I go home on weekends and I stop by my temple. That's the same thing they feed me. It's the real, traditional East Indian food, and I thank you for that.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the throne speech on behalf of the citizens of Kelowna-Lake Country. I'm also pleased to report that our government's vision, presented in the speech, has already produced a positive public dialogue throughout the province. My constituents in Kelowna-Lake Country are excited about the prospects of being part of a new British Columbia.

Our government recognizes that we live in a rapidly changing world. We're already living in a new British Columbia. Standing still is not an option. Fear of change is also not an option. Our challenge is not only to keep up with change; it is to show leadership to shape the future.

[1625]

We cannot go back to the ad hoc thinking of the old British Columbia of the '90s. Government bailouts and band-aids do not work. The throne speech challenges the status quo and presents a bold vision of creative choices, and invites all British Columbians to think big, to embrace innovation and to build on the momentum we've created as a government of the 21st century.

As outlined in the throne speech, we are not afraid to ask the big questions or to look for the big solutions. There are no bigger issues in B.C. than education and health care. We welcome open and honest public debate. Free enterprise means free thought as well. Whether we like it or not, we live in a brave new world. We now have the opportunity to meet the challenges of rapid change.

Like my colleague from Langley who has been listening and talking, I also have been talking to my constituents over a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons and many other restaurants in my riding of Kelowna-Lake Country. Over the past 25 years I've had the privilege of representing my community at all three levels of government. In my riding I'm known as a constituency person. That means I represent the voters and work hard on their behalf. I regularly meet with a wide variety of residents and value their opinions. I hope every MLA in the House listens to their constituents and respects their views. I value various opinions of many individuals, more than those of an elite few.

My constituents tell me that the government could use more common sense. My constituents also tell me that the old ways of government are not working. For

example, it doesn't matter how much taxpayers pour into health care; it just isn't working the way it should. It's like the bottomless cup of coffee.

The throne speech outlines three waves of changes that will guide our great debate. The first wave is to recognize the importance of the fact that the western world is rapidly aging. Within 25 years, one in four of our population will be seniors. People are living longer. The impact on our health care system will be enormous. With this dramatic shift, there will be fewer taxpayers to support this new reality.

The Premier's Council on Aging and Seniors' Issues will help to build the new British Columbia. The constituents of Kelowna-Lake Country want the system fixed. They want value for their hard-earned money. They are the ones that feel the effects of government policy. In a business sense, they are our customers, and the customer is always right. No MLA should be afraid to listen to the taxpayers, even if they don't like what they hear. The Premier's Council is already providing government with valuable advice to help shape this policy.

I also like to listen to the civic officials in my community. The recent municipal election in Kelowna-Lake Country has resulted in major changes. There was a shift away from the status quo. It is now the new Kelowna-Lake Country.

At this time I would like to recognize and congratulate Sharon Shepherd, our new and first woman mayor of Kelowna. Three of the council seats went to newcomers: Carol Gran, Norm Letnick and Michelle Rule. Congratulations to my former colleague Ron Cannan, who was elected as our new Member of Parliament for Kelowna-Lake Country. I also want to recognize James Baker, the new mayor of Lake Country. I have already been working with these new councils and MP Cannan and look forward to a long and strong relationship with them.

I have already begun debating the challenges of change in my community. The number-one issue to emerge in my community and throughout the province was the concept of sustainability. Rejection of the status quo swept the province. Prior to the election, not many people had heard about sustainability. Now it's the talk of the town. We can't afford to create policy without thinking of its sustainability — whether it's sustainable.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

A few days ago the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce held its AGM marking its 100th anniversary. Mayor Shepherd was the keynote speaker, and she shared her vision of sustainability with the business community. In economic terms, sustainability means the ability to provide services well into the future without bankrupting society. In social terms, it means listening to all interested parties to provide the best possible solutions that affect everyone.

I'd like to share a few of these facts to illustrate the rapid changes in Kelowna-Lake Country. I used to be an orchardist and remember when agriculture was the

number-one industry in our area. Today the major employers are health care and education. In its most recent report, the economic development commission indicated that health care and education employ far more workers than the next ten employers combined. They account for more than 20 percent of all jobs in the community.

[1630]

The challenges of change are huge. Canada Mortgage and Housing recently released its report for January. Kelowna-Lake Country continues to set new records for growth. In January of 2005 there were only 55 new housing starts. This year in January there were 236 homes under construction. Our construction industry understands change and has made the needed adjustments to remain sustainable in the highly competitive market. Many of the forecasted 3,000 new units built this year will be condominiums and townhouses. We have a rental vacancy of 0.6 percent, and the projected rate of economic growth this year is more than 11 percent. Clearly, my riding is undergoing rapid change.

Nothing illustrates this fact more than the latest report on Kelowna International Airport. It wasn't long ago that the airport wasn't very international and only offered direct flights to such places as Vancouver and Calgary. It was a small feeder facility. Today, Kelowna International Airport lives up to its name and continues to be the fastest-growing airport in the country. Traffic levels surpassed one million passengers last year. December was the busiest month in history. Volume is up more than 21 percent. Our airport now has some 30 daily departures to several Canadian destinations, as well as Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Seattle and Hawaii. Thankfully, we now have direct flights between Kelowna and Victoria.

This couldn't have been accomplished without successfully coping with rapid change. Credit goes to the hard-working staff and to the innovative thinking of management under the long-term leadership of airport manager Roger Sellick. Not to be overlooked are the contributions of former Kelowna mayors Jim Stuart and Walter Gray. Congratulations to all on a job well done.

I look forward to continuing to work with Kelowna International Airport to assure its success well into the future, and look forward to the lengthening of our runway to accommodate direct flights to Europe and Asia. In addition, we have launched a new aerospace program at the airport in partnership with BCIT, Kelowna Flightcraft Ltd. and Rutland Senior Secondary. This innovative program will deliver first-class aerospace training in the Okanagan to meet the increased demand for skilled workers.

The BCIT Aerospace and Technology Campus is located at the newly built hangar at the airport. Students will learn how to service, repair and modify aircraft to meet Transport Canada's regulations and the high standards of the Aviation Maintenance Council. They will also be educated to meet the new European Aviation Safety Agency standards. This is another example of the need to think globally and act locally. The

aerospace school would not have been a reality without the vision of a true pioneer, Barry Lapointe, president of Flightcraft. For many years he has convinced the community of the promise of following his vision.

Our government, in partnership with the federal and local governments, has already shown leadership in dealing with the social challenges of change. Currently we are having a lively debate in Kelowna over the creation of a harm-reduction facility. Homelessness and substance abuse are serious problems in every community around the world. New thinking is needed to deal with these new social realities. The public dialogue in Kelowna has heard many opinions and ideas, not just from stakeholders but the public as well. Concepts such as harm reduction, the four pillars approach, have sparked the interest of our entire riding.

Just a short while ago none of these ideas were being openly discussed. Similarly, there is no open discussion on the Canada Health Act. Everyone seems to support it; however, the public isn't familiar with its original principles. While we are committed to the values of the Canada Health Act, we need to look at changes to meet today's needs. Our government is not afraid to listen to the public. Spirited debate creates a strong community.

Early next month Kelowna will make recommendations on the establishment of a 30-bed transition house for those in need. This much-needed facility demonstrates our government's commitment to solve the problems of a changing society and the need to let all voices be heard. Our government will continue to support the facility and work with community leaders and individuals to ensure its success regardless of where it's located within the community.

We heard in the throne speech that our population is aging at a dramatic rate. Well, not only is the population of Kelowna-Lake Country aging, it's expanding at a rate that is one of the fastest in Canada. Because of the population boom, Kelowna has grown into a modern city of 109,000, making it the largest urban centre outside of the lower mainland. The central Okanagan has grown to a population of over 165,000.

[1635]

The old Kelowna was mainly static, and growth was slow. Some sections were shrinking or disappearing altogether. The challenges of the past were to attract investment and create jobs. Today there is almost full employment and a shortage of workers. The newspapers are full of help-wanted ads. Business is flourishing, and the world wants to live here. The new Kelowna represents the rapid change our government recognizes.

The same pace of change is happening in Lake Country as well. Not long ago the northern part of my riding was made up of small communities such as Winfield, Oyama and Okanagan Centre. These residents saw a need and came together to form Lake Country. Although Lake Country has had its share of growing pains, change has to be made to handle future needs. The challenge is to plan for growth, to create skilled workers and to create housing. The demands

are endless, and so are the solutions. We realize that we need to keep up with the change or end up as roadkill on the path ahead.

We in Kelowna-Lake Country are faced with a unique challenge for the first time in our history. Although our population is increasing at a record pace, our economy is growing at an even faster pace. Kelowna's population this year is expected to grow at the rate of 3.4 percent. However, the economic boom is forecast to expand at a rate of around 12 percent. We need to think sustainable to ensure that we build a balanced future. We need to ensure that this new potential leads to positive change. The future is bright, and we can't turn off the switch of ideas and innovation.

That's why I'm particularly happy to hear the throne speech commit to a new medical school at UBC Okanagan. This world-class medical facility will allow us to realize the reality of the new British Columbia, and that is to think globally and act locally. Although the new medical school will be located in Kelowna-Lake Country, it will be able to conduct work on a global scale. The research conducted at this new school will be world-class, thanks to recent innovations of our government. Not only is this announcement a major commitment to health care, it illustrates our government's understanding of the importance of the second wave sweeping our social landscape. Knowledge and technology are driving a new global economy.

Earlier this month Kelowna-Lake Country was connected to a worldwide research network as a result of the vision of the provincial government. In partnership with BCNET, this new super-network runs at 10,000 times the speed of commercial Internet. It provides the capacity to conduct intensive medical research in global collaboration. Without this network, we wouldn't be able to fulfil UBC Okanagan's mandate to be a world-class, research-intensive university.

I congratulate our local industry, the economic development commission, the Science Council and the federal government for their support in this major achievement. Because we believe in listening to our constituents, the broadband network has expanded to include Okanagan College, Kelowna General Hospital and a new BCIT aerospace facility located at the Kelowna International Airport.

The new network known as the Kelowna Transit Exchange is today's digital answer to the great rail lines of yesterday's British Columbia. It provides the foundation of our future. The new networks are called light paths and will provide the guiding light to a sustainable society, although a similar high-speed network has been credited with allowing territorial doctors to save a patient's life.

This digital infrastructure will allow us to deal with the challenges of future changes. When we plan properly, we don't have to be afraid of the future. We need to be brave.

Although the new medical school will train much-needed doctors, we are also committed to increasing the number of nurse training spaces by 62 percent. B.C. now has the best health service in Canada, according to

an independent assessment by the Conference Board of Canada. Despite this fact, the public has told us that they are still not satisfied with local service levels. In particular, wait-lists are too long, and patients should not have to stand in line.

The public has spoken, and we have listened. We cannot afford to become complacent. We need to continue to innovate and to improve. That's why I support the creation of a new independent foundation for health care innovation and renewal.

[1640]

I look forward to hearing from the Premier and the Health Minister when they will learn firsthand from some of the best-rated countries. Sweden, Norway, France, and the United Kingdom are pioneers in publicly funded health care. These countries have met the challenges of change and understand the need to think sustainable. They say that knowledge is power, and we need all the knowledge we can get.

Although we're told to think globally, we can't afford not to listen locally. We don't have bottomless health care budgets. We need to fix it so that we have a modern system for future generations. The fact-finding mission will be objective and open to new ideas. That makes sense to me and my constituents. Although everyone supports the Canada Health Act, we have had a mixed model for years. We just haven't really talked about it publicly. Now we have a chance to do something positive. Not only will we listen to the experts; we will also listen to the wisdom of our constituents. I look forward to that discussion.

Our government's commitment to public health care was evident in the throne speech. Major capital expansions have been made to Kelowna General Hospital. We have benefited from the provincial investment in increasing the number of dialysis stations by 60 percent. The number of MRI machines has increased by 90 percent. New CT scanners have also been added.

An extra \$9.7 billion has been added to health care in B.C. since our government first came into office. We have a terrific track record in public health, but we can do better. Sustainable health care means understanding the fact that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

The throne speech addresses the need to develop a comprehensive program to become a healthier province. Through Strong Start B.C. and ActNow we will be giving young students the strong start they need. That's what sustainability means. We need to plan our students' needs from more than just an education perspective. We need to include health issues as well as social considerations.

I'm happy to report that school district 23 is leading the way toward a healthier future. The trustees have adopted a school-based health policy. They're putting into practice the ideas of innovation. Parent advisory councils will now be able to generate their own health policies, like removing junk food.

For the first time, the public will be allowed to have a say at the individual school level. My constituents support the idea that parents should have a say in pub-

lic education decisions. These decisions affect their children; it only makes sense to include them in the education system.

It is also good news to hear that B.C. agricultural products will play a role in this transformation. Schools recognize the need for change, and so do our local fruit growers. Together they can make a positive change. I am pleased to see that our government is in step with the new direction.

We will act to integrate physical fitness and healthy eating habits throughout our schools. A new agricultural plan will encourage B.C. farmers to come forward with proposals to put more of their products and produce in the schools. This is the same message that the Minister of Agriculture and I delivered to the members of the B.C. Fruit Growers Association at the recent AGM in Kelowna. The minister spoke of the need to change and to take advantage of the opportunities in a new, emerging market. The schools provide a new market right in our own back yard. Students should be consumers of our healthy, homegrown products. I'd like to see the day that I can walk into any school in my riding and find fresh apples available in all the vending machines — finally, healthy fruits and vegetables instead of soda pop.

I want to thank the minister for listening to the growers, which resulted in some innovative solutions. I'd also like to pass along my appreciation to Joe Sardinha, president of the BCFGA, and his fellow directors for their service to the industry and the public.

We all recognize that healthy students make better learners. Healthy habits start at school, and I want to acknowledge the visionaries at George Elliot Secondary School in Lake Country, where grade eights and nines recently spent a day brushing up on everything from oral health to drugs, alcohol and sugary soft drinks. They also had a sumo-wrestling exercise break. This is what innovation is all about.

I'm sure Canada's Olympic athletes are providing our students with the inspiration to become physically fit. In particular, I'd like to recognize Craig Buntin of Kelowna, who chased his dream this week in Turin, Italy. He and his partner placed 11th in pairs figure skating, and I'm sure he'll be back to chase the gold in 2010.

[1645]

George Elliot is known throughout the central Okanagan for developing healthier choices, and I want to congratulate everyone who sponsored this day of enrichment called "Living on the Edge: A Healthy Lifestyles Retreat." In particular, I would like to recognize the trustees for their inspiration, especially Lake Country trustee Anna Hunt-Brinkley.

Not to be overlooked in the throne speech is our government's commitment to the spirit of the Kelowna accord. We will continue to work closely with first nations leaders and our governments to close the gaps that have disadvantaged aboriginal children and families in the past. Our government will act to advance regionalization of child and family services. It is vital that aboriginal people have the same economic and

social opportunities as any of our citizens. This is the point of the Kelowna accord.

I want to briefly touch on the throne speech third wave — the fact that the Asia-Pacific is now the world's front door to growth and opportunity. Our community is recognizing this new reality. As I said earlier, the supply of workers cannot keep up with the demand. We are looking at innovative ways of increasing immigration for this region to assist our agricultural industry.

I have close ties with the East Indian community of Kelowna-Lake Country. We wouldn't be enjoying the fruits of our orchards and vineyards without their hard work. Today the East Indian community plays a major, important role in our agriculture. Without their contribution, we wouldn't have such a successful farming community. I look forward to assisting them in any way I can to ensure agriculture remains sustainable.

In closing, I would like to add my voice in full support of the throne speech. It provides a road map to the future of our province and not a rearview mirror to the past. The speech lays out the blueprint for us to follow. Now it's up to all of us to fill in the blanks. I look forward to continuing in listening to my constituents' opinions and representing their views in this House.

**R. Austin:** I rise today to give my reply to the throne speech that was delivered earlier this week. As the member representing Skeena, a northern and largely rural riding with communities that are situated far apart, I always try to use a specific lens to see how potential changes in government programs and policies will affect my constituents.

My lens has to take into consideration that the bulk of government policies are set up to benefit the majority of the people in this province, who live in an urban setting. That is not to be unexpected. My role here is to explain, to advocate — hopefully, in an intelligent fashion — that our way of life is different up north, that we have unique needs and circumstances that make the delivery of services very different from that in the lower mainland.

This government sits basking in the glory of a large budget surplus, and for all our sakes I sincerely hope that the commodity prices that largely drive this economy remain strong. Those of us who live up north and have endured the massive cuts that have occurred due to regionalization fully understand what delivery of health care and education means to us. As I speak, my entire riding is still on a four-day school week.

When one of us gets sick and has to fly to Vancouver for medical services, as happens all too often, our accessibility to that hospital bed begins with a frantic phone call to friends or relatives to figure out how to pay for the plane ride and if we can afford to take a loved one and pay for the hotels and meals that are needed. Only a few of my constituents can pay for this access because they have the sufficient resources to do this. Many more have to rely on a credit card, yet we still propagate the myth that we don't have credit card medicine in Canada.

The government talks, in this Speech from the Throne, of the "remarkable transformation of economic revitalization, fiscal renewal and social achievement." Living in the northwest, these words ring very hollow as we continue to lose population, see no solution to the softwood lumber dispute and see a coastal forest sector that is in disarray.

Even our largest economic driver, the cheap electricity of the Kemano power plant that was supposed to be used to generate well-paying jobs in B.C.'s aluminum industry, has been effectively given away by this government. By allowing Alcan to become an independent power producer rather than an industrial manufacturer, this government has held true to their ideology of serving the needs of shareholders while abandoning its fiduciary responsibility to ensure the most advantageous use of public resources for the people of British Columbia.

[1650]

Clearly, the emphasis of this throne speech was to prepare the public for the changes that this government wants to bring in to the health care system. I understand the economic challenges of a rapidly aging population and the strain on our health care system. We are not the only jurisdiction in Canada, or indeed in the western world, that is facing these challenges. But I am very concerned that the government will use this to create a system where even those who live in the lower mainland will have to ensure that they have good credit in case they need medical services, as is the case for us living up north.

The Premier stated that he wants to learn from other jurisdictions. One of those places he mentioned going to was Britain. Having grown up in Britain and having availed myself of the National Health Service for a considerable part of my life, I believe strongly that the Premier will at least learn there what not to do. Until the late 1970s the National Health Service was the envy of the world. Indeed, many aspects of Britain's NHS were used as a model by Tommy Douglas when he brought about changes in Saskatchewan that eventually served as the model for Canada's medical system.

I trust that the Premier and the Health Minister will ask what has happened to this system that was once the envy of the world. A lack of funding to that system caused dissatisfaction. The government of the time's answer to that dissatisfaction was very simple. Margaret Thatcher came in, in the late '80s or early '90s and said: "Well, we now have too many people. Our population has grown, and people are getting older" — not unlike some of the problems we have here. Her answer was simple: "All we need to do in government is to allow those who can afford it to get their medical services from the private sector, and then all those public sector beds would be open, all that operating room space would be open, and the public sector would be able to give better service."

What has been the result? The result has been one level of health care for those who can afford to go private and another level — no longer the envy of the world but, rather, a second-class service — for the rest of the people. Seeing how those who maintain political

power never see the inside of a NHS hospital, they can only read horror stories from the media, who occasionally need some sordid story to sell newspapers, rather than try and create an intelligent dialogue into fixing the National Health Service.

Let me elaborate on a recent experience. I went home this Christmas to Britain to visit family. One of my aunts, who's in her 70s, retired from a company there that had very, very good health care coverage. In fact, she was covered privately; she worked for Smith and Nephew. A few years into her retirement, being on a fixed income, she decided that for the benefit of their finances, she and her husband would stop their payments to the private medical system and rely on the NHS. Sadly for her, she got ill within a couple of months with a very serious disorder and spent over a year in and out of various hospitals. Her immediate reaction to the diagnosis that she got was: "Oh my goodness, I should have kept my private health care." I fear that's what will happen in British Columbia.

The Copeman clinic here in Vancouver is just the thin edge of the wedge for the B.C. medical system. In fact, we heard the minister today agreeing that this clinic is in violation of the Canada Health Act but that his ministry is working with Mr. Copeman. As my colleague pointed out to me, since when do we negotiate with people breaking the law?

I want to move on to the issue of skilled workers in B.C. Quoting from the throne speech: "Skilled workers will be even more in demand. Canada will look to address that imbalance through immigration and new use of knowledge and technology."

We have people in the northwest who are struggling to find work but who want to live in the northwest and raise their families there. We have a skills shortage, but we do not fund our college system to train these workers with the skills that B.C. needs.

We know that it is hard to attract people to live outside the lower mainland. In fact, that alone has created so many problems for many of my colleagues and for members on the government side who are challenged every day to overcome transportation, housing and a host of other issues here in the lower mainland. At the same time that the government is looking to bring in immigrant workers to fill our skills gap, surely it would be better to train people in remote and rural areas so that they have the skills to fill this gap.

[1655]

In two of my communities, Gitwagak and Gitanyow, there is unemployment of over 90 percent. There are mining opportunities and transportation infrastructure as well as a host of medical jobs that cannot be filled. Surely those people who have committed themselves to living in the north should have the chances to gain the skills to fill those jobs instead of relying on immigrants who, quite possibly, will only want to live in the lower mainland once they get here.

We have so much difficulty attracting people with specialized skills to live in the north. It is time we trained locally — not just doctors and nurses, as we've done after many commissions and think tanks, but

radiologists, steam engineers, welders, carpenters and electricians.

I recently visited the Northwest Community College in Terrace, as well as CNC campus in Prince George, and was told the same thing. There was a huge demand for the trades programs, but they don't have the funding to increase capacity, as it costs so much more to deliver a trades program compared to a university transfer course. What is the point of announcing 25,000 new spaces at the post-secondary level if there is not the accompanying funding to supply the courses that the market requires?

I must also mention something that I have touched on before, which is that we have a much higher level of need in literacy programs in the northwest as well as basic adult education programs, which another member has just alluded to, so that people can, indeed, change their lives and eventually take advantage of post-secondary opportunities. Instead, all that this throne speech talks of is addressing the skills shortage by increasing immigration.

There is also no talk of increasing the opportunities for apprenticeship programs at a time when we desperately need them. These programs were cut by this government in an effort to deskill the workforce by turning carpenters into drywallers or framers or window installers and suchlike. Now even the business community is coming to me, complaining that all they can find is a half-skilled worker who is not worth paying more than \$10 an hour. Welcome to some of the transformational change in the labour market courtesy of this Liberal government.

As the throne speech is so full of questions, let me ask one. Can we in the north afford any more transformational change from this government? I think not.

Let me move for a moment to another important social issue. The speech refers to the government's notion of early childhood development: "The best way to assure our children lead healthy lives is to give them a strong start in life." That sounds good on paper. Even Clyde Hertzman, having done so much research into the components required for healthy early development, would approve. But let's look at the record.

People on social assistance have been attacked by this government. Not satisfied with blaming adults for their predicament, scores of young children have been consigned to poverty. While it is admirable to be looking at opening child care centres in underutilized school rooms, we need to recognize that the skills taught in an early childhood education setting are not the same as those taught in the K-to-12 system. Who is going to do the teaching if we use these public facilities?

Besides, if this government has not even stood up to defend the child care agreement that was signed by the outgoing government, it hardly bodes well for the future of child care in this province, despite the nice words. I can assure you that \$1,200 before taxes to every parent of an under-six-year-old is small comfort when what we need is more professional child care spaces. If the federal government had not set up the medical system under the Canada Health Act but in-

stead had given each citizen \$100 a year and said, "There you go; now take care of your health care needs," where would we be today?

All parents in my constituency will be delighted that the Premier and Minister of Education will be visiting school district 82 — and, frankly, so will I — because they will get to hear first hand what our families are going through with a four-day school week. If Vancouver, Burnaby or North Vancouver school districts had chosen to bring in a four-day school week, do you think for a minute that this Liberal government would have stood idly by and said: "Well, we give money to individual school districts, and they make local decisions as to how best to spend the money"? That's what the answer was to me during estimates last year. There would have been a riot here in the Legislature if any large school district down south had made that decision. So long as it's a remote school district up north, the attitude is: "Well, that's okay."

[1700]

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you that that is not okay. Our children are not second-class citizens in school district 82. Our kids deserve what other kids in British Columbia, indeed in the western world, have: a proper five-day school week. The reason this has come to be is that our school district has been unable to make up for the loss of so many families in the past five years, and yet the funding formula does not take into account a school district that suffers such a massive decline in enrolment.

I would like to end on a positive note and congratulate this government on choosing the kermode bear as the official provincial animal. Terrace, where I live, has the kermode bear as our city logo, as these wonderful animals live in and around the Terrace area. In fact, I understand that my predecessor here in the House attempted to get the Olympic committee to adopt the kermode bear as the official symbol of the 2010 Olympics. But others thought it better to choose something that I guess is from the Northwest Territories. My hope is that all people from around the world will see the kermode bear when they visit here for the Olympics and will be encouraged to come up north to visit our beautiful part of the province.

**Hon. B. Bennett:** I wish that the speaker who just went before me felt as warmly about immigrants as he does about bears.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity. I'm happy to respond. I'm honoured to respond to the throne speech. In the short four and a half years this government has been in charge in B.C., we've dealt with very many challenges. We've wrestled the provincial deficit to the ground. We've convinced the world that B.C. is once again a responsible, well-managed jurisdiction deserving of investment and job creation. Our economy is booming. We took on the very difficult issue of regionalizing our health care services, and despite the lack of effective communications — which I readily admit, because I was there when it happened — we made some huge improvements to the care that our citizens receive.

In my area in the East Kootenay we have a \$31 million expansion taking place at our regional hospital in Cranbrook that's ongoing today as I speak. Our regional hospital, thanks to the funding from Victoria and a commitment from the Premier to a strong centre of excellence in the East Kootenay, now has a full slate of medical specialists, an MRI and vastly improved care for the 80,000 people living in our beautiful region.

On the seniors front, almost every town in the Kootenay region is receiving or has received a new or renovated facility for seniors. Some are assisted living; some are residential care; some have both. I must tell you that it's difficult for me to listen to the NDP denigrate the positive changes that have taken place around seniors care. I did some research a few days ago, and I noticed that before we were elected in 2001, the Health Ministry stated that seniors care had to be changed in two fundamental ways, and I quote: "To decrease residential care utilization and to ensure the widest-possible implementation of a number of service options, including focusing residential facilities on providing services only to clients with high and complex needs." That's what the NDP said prior to our being elected. If that sounds familiar, it should sound familiar.

We're changing residential care facilities to be capable of caring for seniors with those high and complex needs, and we're also building assisted-living units as fast as we can to ensure that seniors who don't need and don't want institutional care have that more independent option. It is sheer hypocrisy for the NDP today to criticize this government for doing something they admitted then needed doing but which they did not have the political will to do themselves.

I believe that the throne speech we just heard in the last few days is a courageous statement by the B.C. Liberal government, and I want to focus for a moment on the implications of that throne speech for the future of health care in B.C. and in Canada. This throne speech lays down a challenge for all of us to see past today, to see past next year, the year after and certainly past the next provincial election. Try and see out to when our children and their children will be leading this great province and doing their best to meet the challenges of the 21st century, which no doubt will be daunting.

No challenge to our kids and to our grandkids will be more formidable or intimidating than the challenge of looking after their parents and their grandparents. We in the baby-boom generation have had it good. In our youth we were so plentiful, we came to feel like we ruled the world. In many ways — certainly in terms of how our numbers drove so many changes — we did rule the world. If we liked rock and roll music, for example, that became the music of the world. If we enjoyed rebellion, well, rebellion became the benchmark of our generation — at least until we could afford mortgages.

[1705]

As we entered the job market, we had it made. It seemed there was a job for everyone, and my recollection, anyhow, was that you didn't really have to worry much about the future. Our sheer numbers, our pur-



chasing power, the euphoria of the post-Second World War years and our unbridled confidence in the future all combined to create the luckiest generation in the history of the world.

We definitely didn't have to worry about the basics, like health care. If we were sick, we simply called the doctor. Often he came to our house to look after us. If our parents needed to take us to the emergency ward at our local hospital — and every little town had a hospital in those days — it was a simple process and required waiting maybe for a half-hour. Drugs were rarely prescribed by our physicians. Aspirin was the drug of choice, and if you really had to take something special, you must have been really sick.

Then there's today. We boomers are older. Some of us are stiff and hurting and so far past our prime that we usually wake up sore in the morning. The doctor no longer comes to our houses. In fact, many of us no longer live in houses, as we've come to know that. We live in something called condominiums and apartments. If we are prescribed a drug, it is likely something we've never heard of, and it costs a bundle. If we actually have to be in a hospital, we are likely subjected to newfangled, complicated machinery and technology that reminds us of our after-school days of watching *Star Trek*. There's a piece of equipment for every diagnosis, a specialist for every malady.

We're lucky that science has taken us so far. When we get sick or we get hurt, it's much more likely that we'll be cured. We have reasonable expectations today that we're going to live longer than our grandparents. Our health care system is actually a miracle, when you stop to consider how complex and how scientific it really is. Here in B.C. we're proud that some people in Canada think that we have the best patient outcomes, the best system in the country and the healthiest people who live the longest. That is cause for us to celebrate, and all partisanship aside, we all share a desire to look after people in our communities who need health care.

But as a baby-boomer, someone who has been part of that luckiest generation, I feel uneasy. I got into politics largely because I believe the policies of the NDP government of the 1990s were irresponsible, and my dissatisfaction was greatest with how they refused to help us in the Kootenays with health care. It's not that they shouldn't have added the new money that they did. On the contrary, we need to respond to the needs of our citizens. Our government has added \$9.7 billion of extra money, new money, to the health care budget since we were first elected in 2001.

The rhetoric — and they're good at the rhetoric — about cuts to health care by the public sector unions and the New Democrats was an exercise in flimflam that would have impressed W.C. Fields himself. However, there's no doubt: changes were definitely made. Resources were moved around. Management decisions were based on patient outcomes and not politics. Sometimes that makes you unpopular. It did cause quite a ruckus, and some missteps were made, but no cuts were made to the budget for health care since this

government was elected in 2001 — on the contrary, \$9.7 billion.

The Conference Board of Canada says that B.C. has the best health care system in Canada, so why am I uneasy? My uneasiness doesn't come from the amount of money that government invests in the health care system. My uneasiness is born in the knowledge that my wife and I have only two children, while between us, our own families had eight. My uneasiness comes from the fact that enrolment in our public schools has dropped by 36,000 students since 2001. My uneasiness comes from the fact that seniors comprise one in seven in our province, as the throne speech stated, but by 2030 it will be one senior for every four British Columbians. My uneasiness comes from the fact that British Columbians over 70 and 80 use the health care system much, much more than I do at 55, or much more than my kids do in their 20s.

There is a huge demographic shift happening. It's been happening since the Second World War, and successive governments have simply refused to face up to what that shift means to the future of health care services. It's just been too easy to throw more and more money at the problem, rather than ask what alternatives we should choose to deliver the services that we all want.

I go into my high schools on a regular basis, or at least as often as they'll have me, and I'm usually asked to talk about government, about how it works, and a little bit about politics. I usually talk to them about their future. I encourage them to work hard and to achieve as best they can, but to measure their own self-worth by how well they get along with their families and their friends, and by how many good deeds they can do in a day.

[1710]

Most often I end up talking about the provincial debt — at first not a very captivating topic for high school students, but the more they understand how it comes close to their lives, the more interested they become. I often ask them if their parents give them everything they want and all the money they want to spend. Of course, you know how they answer.

I tell them that there are not as many of them as there are of us boomers. I tell them that that means there will be many fewer taxpayers as they go into the working world and start a lifetime of paying taxes. I tell them that my generation and my parents' generation will expect the same level of health care as we receive today, with the caveat that all the new drugs and all the new technologies will also have to be paid for by them. I tell these students that I will need all my seniors allowances, both federal and provincial, and then I usually ask them who they figure is going to pay for my seniors allowances and my old age pension, my free bus pass, my free parking pass and my health care. It's about at that time that they become really interested in the provincial debt.

Don't get me wrong. There's as much promise and opportunity in British Columbia today for young people as there was when my namesakes, the two Bennets, were Premiers in this province. That's thanks to

the policies of this government. In fact, in my region, in the Kootenays, unemployment is at an all-time low. Our problem is not actually finding jobs but finding people to fill the jobs.

With the work this government is doing and with a little luck, our kids should have glorious opportunities. But when it comes to health care, I have to ask: what is it that we are handing off to them? Today we have a system in Canada that, according to the UN, is about 30th in the world. We deceive ourselves if we still believe that Canadian health care is the model for the rest of the world. It's a good system, but it's 30th.

We are better off than many, many countries in the world; there's no question. But we have a system that devours an increasing proportion of our provincial budget. Today it eats up 44 percent of the total provincial budget. What happens when it gets to 50 percent or 60 percent or 70 percent? At what point do we say we need to do things differently so that we have some revenue left for infrastructure, for education, for training, for all the social programs we've become accustomed to? What happens when we have hundreds of thousands fewer taxpayers and hundreds of thousands more seniors tapping into our health care system? At what point are we prepared to look at what others in the world are doing and drop this national façade that the Canadian health care system is perfect just the way it is?

I'm proud and I'm grateful that the throne speech read in this House a couple of days ago asked four very direct and honest questions. Does it really matter to patients where or how they obtain their surgical treatment if it's paid for with public funds?

Mr. Speaker, if you were a grandpa — and I don't know if you are a grandpa or not, but if you were — and you wanted to take your granddaughter fishing, I don't know whether it would matter to you how you got your hip replaced if that's what you needed.

Why are we so afraid to look at mixed health care delivery models? Are we really so smart in B.C. that we have nothing to learn from France or Norway? Why are we so quick to condemn any consideration of other systems as a slippery slope to an American-style system that nobody here wants?

Have we allowed the political discourse in this country to deteriorate to the point where we are afraid to contemplate openly all the options that exist for our thoughtful consideration? I think we know the answer to that when it comes to the folks on the other side of this House. If a political axe can be ground, they will grind it, even if it inhibits a free and open discussion about something that is of utmost importance to all of our citizens and to future generations.

The final of the four basic questions asked in the throne speech: why shouldn't we build our health care system on a foundation of sustainability? Is it wrong for us to wonder out loud about how affordable the present system will be when all of us boomers are seniors and our kids are trying to pay for us as well as their own mortgage and their own kids' education?

The answer to these questions over the next while will prove how mature we have become as a province and as a nation. The way the two main political parties in B.C. answer these questions will show who is prepared to lead and who would prefer the easy route of incessant criticism and fearmongering.

The predominant theme in this year's throne year is transformation — transformation of our health care system and our education system and our economy. In my area of responsibility, mining — and I'm very fortunate to be able to work with mining — the transformation has already been spectacular.

[1715]

It's easy, of course, to forget just what mining in B.C. was like only a few short years ago, and I'm fairly certain that the members opposite would rather we don't talk about their record anymore. But it's impossible to understand the transformation in mining without first acknowledging just how low the industry had sunk by 2001.

After the treachery and tragic indecision around the Windy Craggy deposit, much of mining left B.C. for Kazakhstan and Argentina, fearing that their investment was no longer secure in B.C. Fortunately, many, many head offices did decide to stay in Vancouver, so that was good. But unfortunately, their investment dollars and the jobs flowed out to other countries and provinces.

The decline in government support for mining in B.C. started way back in 1972, when 15 seats with a key mining presence shifted from the Socreds to the NDP. In 1973 the Barrett government implemented what they called a super-royalty, a cash grab that reverberated around the world and sent out a chilling signal to investors, whose capital in the mining industry is very mobile.

Later, Noranda Mines, one of the big mining companies in the world, left B.C., but not before they closed all four of their mines. Falconbridge closed its one mine in B.C. It shut down its exploration in the province, and it shifted its corporate attention to Chile. Newmont sold its mine in Princeton and left the province. Exploration investment declined. Half of the mines we once had were no more. Over half of the mining jobs that rural families depend on and that I hear my colleagues from across the way talking about were gone. They were lost.

In 1992, just after another NDP government was elected, Mr. A.M. Laird, senior vice-president for Placer Dome, gave a major speech in Vancouver in which he stated: "It is of paramount importance to the B.C. mining industry and to the economy of the province that the government eliminate causes which discourage mining investment in B.C."

In response to that, the NDP government of the day increased the water tax without consultation, after promising they would not do so, and they reinstated the corporation capital tax. In 1992, on the day of the first Clark government budget, a \$500 million project for a world-class smelter in Kitimat was shelved after three years of work and huge cost, and the prospect for 1,200 jobs in the northwest was lost. We all know — in

fact, we just heard it with the previous speaker — that the northwest suffered a lot during the 1990s. Just think of what those 1,200 jobs would have meant. They would have been a godsend to the northwest region in B.C.

By '92 the asset base of the B.C. mining industry, which had been \$7.9 billion in 1986, had fallen to \$3.2 billion. There was a photo at the time — and I was practising law in B.C. at the time — of an NDP Mines minister that circulated throughout the mining industry as a top prospect for Chile's mining person of the year.

I'm not going to go on with my history lesson.

[Applause.]

**An Hon. Member:** They don't want to hear it. They don't want to hear it. They're cheering.

**Hon. B. Bennett:** They really don't want to hear it.

Don't let anyone in this House or anywhere else say that the NDP believes in mining. I don't buy it. I can tell you that the industry doesn't buy it. Every worker and every family that depends on mining should not buy it either. It's the B.C. Liberals who have done the necessary work to underpin this amazing transformation in mining in B.C. over the past five years.

In 2001, when we were first elected, the total investment in exploration was 29 million bucks for the province. This past year we saw \$50 million invested in just one exploration project, and another project where there was \$18 million just in that one project.

Back in the 1990s you would just as likely see a geologist driving a cab in Vancouver. Today the industry is scrambling to find people to work in the industry. Everything from tradespeople skilled in operating mines and mining developments to prospectors in the field are in great demand.

Communities like Smithers, Prince George, Dawson Creek, Kamloops and Cranbrook are sizzling with mining activity and with confidence. When it comes to mining, confidence is the underlying foundation for growing mining investment. There is no doubt that commodity prices are also a key factor. "Wait for the applause from the other side," it says here. No applause.

[Applause.]

Thank you very much. Thank you.

But here's an interesting little tidbit on the importance of commodity prices. In 2001, B.C.'s share of Canadian exploration investment was about 6 percent in the country.

**Hon. P. Bell:** Six percent, you say?

**Hon. B. Bennett:** Yeah, 6 percent. So for every \$100 spent on mining exploration in Canada, under the NDP, B.C. got \$6.

**Hon. P. Bell:** How is it now?

[1720]

**Hon. B. Bennett:** Well, today, after the many initiatives this government has put into place to encourage mining, B.C.'s share of Canadian exploration investment is about 14 percent — more than double. The prices of copper and gold and coal are the same all over Canada — not just here in B.C. Even my friends on the other side will have to admit that there is something different about mining in British Columbia today.

You know what that difference is? That difference is the B.C. Liberal government. This government wrote a mining plan for B.C. — in collaboration, of course, with our stakeholders — that set out a course of action to achieve the transformation that we all wanted. We reduced corporate income tax. We reduced personal income tax. We eliminated sales tax on mining machinery and equipment. We eliminated....

Interjection.

**Deputy Speaker:** Member, could we please have respect for the speaker in the House to allow him to speak so that we can all hear him.

**Hon. B. Bennett:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We eliminated the corporate capital tax, which is a tax on investment, not income. We established the most attractive tax incentives for grassroots mining exploration in Canada. That's helped a lot. We reduced the regulatory burden by 30 percent without reducing the highest environmental and reclamation standards in the world. We educated the mining industry and the investment community around the world — and we're not done with this yet — about the advantages of B.C.'s geology, the strength of our people and this government's genuine belief in mining.

We invested \$25 million in a partnership with industry for new geoscience. If you don't have new geoscience, you don't find new mines. We created a two-zone system for access to land that created the certainty that mining needs to create new jobs. We created a first-class on-line claims registration system that is the envy of the mining industry around the world. We're working right now on an on-line permitting process that will put B.C. in the forefront of mining again in the world.

The policies of the B.C. Liberal government have made the difference. Commodity prices are exactly the same in every single part of this country, but our share of mineral exploration in Canada has more than doubled because of the things that I just talked about that this government has done to support mining.

British Columbia is being transformed. It's being transformed by the hard-working people who live in this beautiful place, with a little bit of help from their government. We believe in them, we believe in their ideas, and we believe in their work ethic.

It is a pleasure to start another term as a member of a B.C. Liberal government. I look forward very much, with great enthusiasm, to the next year.

[Applause.]

**C. Wyse:** I would like to acknowledge the applause from the members opposite for when I stood up. It was most appreciative.

I wish to extend a welcome-back to all my colleagues here in the House. I hope that we all have returned refreshed. From some of the responses to the throne speech that I've heard from my colleagues opposite, I'm sure that they've been doing a lot of dreaming. From the content that is contained within their speeches, it seems to me that they definitely have returned quite refreshed.

The task that we have in front of us, of course, is to respond to the throne speech. It is indeed my privilege to discuss with you, Mr. Speaker, my response to that throne speech that was given a couple of days ago.

The 2006 throne speech focused on the theme of transformative change. That certainly is an interesting topic — and, as a member opposite has noted, a topic open to quite different interpretations, conclusions and observations. I am indeed honoured to give you, Mr. Speaker, my interpretation, conclusions and observations on the throne speech. In particular, I am quite pleased to be standing up and responding to the throne speech after my colleague opposite, the minister, and some of the comments that he made. I was wondering whether they were appropriate to have included in my throne speech, but assuredly, he has given me the case to have included these particular comments that I will come to shortly.

[1725]

From the throne speech I have taken a couple of quotes to begin our discussion on transformative change. "Transformative change was the key to British Columbia's progress in the past four and a half years. It has been a remarkable transformation of economic revitalization, fiscal renewal and social achievement." Likewise, many members opposite have in their throne speeches taken claim for the economic boom that we have experienced here within British Columbia.

So with those two items in mind, Mr. Speaker, I find that that indeed is a remarkable claim to make. Let's you and I examine this remarkable transformation referred to in the throne speech.

Under economic revitalization we should look at some other economic keys not referred to. Members opposite claim credit for the results of record commodity prices for base metals. One of the aspects that mining is dependent upon is to show a profit. That, in actual fact, is where the commodity prices come into play. When we look back into Cariboo South, where I am from, the mines in that area closed down because the price of copper had plummeted to 60 cents — in that range. The price of copper now is well in excess of \$2 per pound. That increase in the commodity price has increased the profitability, leading to these mines re-opening. That also is a fact that has not been mentioned here in discussions to date.

Likewise, we have had reference made to mineral exploration. One of the interesting aspects in geology is

that people prospect for Mother Nature. In actual fact, her forces have led to the possible deposits that we hope to discover and develop. It is the result of those forces that has led to British Columbia having, coupled with those commodity prices, the increase in mineral exploration that has taken place. Those two facts are important to mention in this discussion.

We also need to have a look at the effect of the record prices of oil and natural gas and what that has done to the economics of British Columbia — an important segment, but again, beyond the control of this particular House.

We have also had the lowest interest rates in decades, a significant contributing factor to the economic boom found throughout the world. Likewise, we have the booming economics of China making demands for our natural resources — natural resources that we are very fortunate to have, and they must be managed properly in order to look after the well-being, the social aspect, of our particular population here in British Columbia.

Surely the members opposite did not mean to take credit for these factors in B.C.'s economic revitalization.

Leaving that particular topic, I'd like to move on to one of the other legs contained within the throne that I referred to a while ago. Under fiscal changes, we also need to examine some changes made by the government over the last four and a half years. These changes also included reduced revenue to the provincial coffers by \$2.5 billion annually. Ninety percent of that income tax reduction was returned to the wealthiest 10 percent of British Columbians. The government also granted an annual reduction of half a billion dollars to the corporations, with many of those corporations posting record profits during this period of time. This change led to a government claiming a lack of resources to support the most vulnerable people of B.C. In fact, many government agencies lost hundreds of employees who provided that support.

[1730]

Shortly I will return to the effect of these decisions. But before I leave here, I was reminded by a member opposite just a few minutes ago that in actual fact it was this government that added record dollars to the debt of British Columbia — record dollars that in total did not match the number of dollars that had been put onto the debt during all governments previous to that.

Under social achievements it is time to discuss the following results over the last four and a half years: a record number of homeless persons living in the back alleys and streets of our communities, and persons with mental illness but with reduced areas to seek support. I have some examples of numbers from around British Columbia that combine those two particular areas so that I can elaborate and help you understand the point I'm raising, Mr. Speaker.

In Penticton, on a monthly basis, there are 140 people with mental illness that seek housing accommodations. At the end of a 30-day period of time, 70 percent of those individuals will not have found housing. That's 105 individuals, a result of a tour that I made through the Penticton area a few months ago. In

Williams Lake — which is part of Cariboo South, and part of the city of Williams Lake is in my riding — there are 13 people with mental illness who are on a waiting list looking for housing. In Vancouver — to move around to another region and to show that this exists right around British Columbia — we have over 2,000 people who are homeless, half of whom suffer from a mental illness.

Child poverty in B.C. is the highest in the country. Persons with addictions lack the necessary treatment centres. Those social achievements are not mentioned in the throne speech. However, there are areas in this speech that I do find laudable, and I'd like to refer to three of them at this moment. As this is my throne speech, these are my three, and I'm sure that other members in this House have chosen parts of the throne speech they find laudable.

I wish to acknowledge the reference to accelerating discovery in spinal cord research contained in the throne speech. I also wish to acknowledge the establishment of a research chair in the primary prevention of cancer, and likewise, I also wish to acknowledge the comment that is contained in the throne speech on dementia — to strive to establish a national research collaborative. That, to me, provides a glimmer of hope. At least we're going to strive to try to put something together around this very important topic.

Also, the throne speech was used to develop themes on health care, education and housing. Let's look at my interpretation regarding health care and the government's privatization agenda. The government blames growing wait-lists, overcrowded emergency rooms and declining care for seniors on the principles underlying medicare. The throne speech says the principles of the Canada Health Act are undefined. That is wrong. The principles are clear. Private for-profit medicine violates the Canada Health Act. British Columbians expect the government to improve the health care system. Instead, the government is choosing privatization over innovations in the public health system, threatening B.C. with a two-tier health system.

On education. The throne speech offered no substantive plan to improve education. It contained only a promise to visit school districts. There was no plan to reduce class sizes or to improve education outcomes. There was no commitment to improve the government's relationship with B.C. teachers. In fact, in our last session, Mr. Speaker, I believe you and I spent a night together listening to the concerns around this particular item.

[1735]

On housing. The government's promise to improve social housing amounts to one thing: to dismantle social housing and move to rent supplements. Rent supplements mean less protection for low-income B.C.'ers; higher rents; and the loss of key, long-term investments in communities across the province. In Cariboo South, non-profit societies providing housing needs have already voiced their concern of being left out in the proposed expansion of housing. I wish to convey that con-

cern to this House. They are providing a very valued and valuable service to the people of Cariboo South.

It is time to discuss key points for British Columbians that are ignored in the throne speech. Noticeably absent from the throne speech are rural B.C. and issues that impact these residents directly. The mountain pine beetle epidemic and the disastrous effect it is having on interior communities warranted only a brief mention that the beetle exists. Where is the mention of improvements for the interior transportation system — under stress caused by neglect, and worsened with the increased transportation from logging of the beetle-kill wood?

There is no mention of skyrocketing Olympic cost overruns. There is no real plan to address the skills shortage facing industry and commercial segments of B.C. communities, referred to by colleagues on both sides of this House. Finally, an issue of much concern to Cariboo South residents: no mention of long-term care beds and the government's broken promise to build 5,000 new long-term care beds for seniors.

In fact, the village of Ashcroft awaits the building permit to be taken out for the eight senior care beds announced to be opened this March 2006. To date, the building permit has not been taken out. I don't think you're going to reach the achievement of having those eight beds built by the end of this month.

At this time, I wish to acknowledge that the volunteer firefighters were included with paid firefighters in changes to WCB — a change introduced by the opposition and acted upon, and a move that was much appreciated by the volunteer firefighters of the Cariboo at large.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

It would also be appropriate for me to acknowledge improvements to the NDI Trust legislation by this House, although it did fail to recognize first nations involvement at the board level as recommended by the opposition.

In returning directly to the throne speech, a throne speech is a list of dreams. It is a list of visions. Indeed, it is a list of promises. It is within that light that I now wish to talk about the throne speech.

B.C. had been promised the best education system, while the reality became overcrowded classrooms and record days lost to students. We have been promised the best in child care. Instead, the system faced a \$40 million reduction in budget. They promised a strategy for the heartlands, while little has been done to deal with the crisis in forestry; a promise to build the best system of support for at-risk children, while delivering chaos in child protection and the highest child poverty rate in Canada; a promise to build, open and operate an additional 5,000 intermediate and long-term care beds by the year 2006, while thousands of long-term care beds were closed and a plan to replace those beds still remains a promise; a promise that over the next years this government would enhance training resources and authority for front-line social workers to

promptly protect children at risk, while the Ministry of Children and Families faced the biggest cuts and left the child population in chaos.

[1740]

In closing, Cariboo South looks forward to more actions that benefit the residents of the interior. While its residents appreciate the meet-and-greets promised in the throne speech, its residents wish for more actions that benefit the residents of the interior.

The member opposite referred earlier today to the number of promises in the throne speech and his confidence that the government will deliver on each promise made. Time will tell. If past experience is any guide, the delivery on the promises contained in the throne speech remains highly questionable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for having had this informed discussion with me on the throne speech.

**L. Mayencourt:** Noting the time, I move adjournment of debate and request that I be able to hold my place in the debate at the next sitting after today.

L. Mayencourt moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Richmond moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

**Mr. Speaker:** This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. Monday morning.

The House adjourned at 5:41 p.m.

## HANSARD SERVICES

Director  
Anthony Dambrauskas

Acting Production Manager  
Robert Sutherland

Assistant Production Manager  
Jill Ainsley

Editorial Supervisors  
Janet Brazier, Christine Ewart

Galley Editor  
Heather Bright

Technical Operations Officers  
Pamela Holmes, Emily Jacques

Research  
Jaime Apolonio, Mike Beninger  
Dan Kerr, Cristy McLennan  
Sarah Wiebe

Editors  
Shannon Ash, Laurel Bernard, Andrew Costa,  
Heather Gleboff, Margaret Gracie, Jane Grainger, Iris Gray,  
Linda Guy, Bill Hrick, Paula Lee, Elizabeth Levinson,  
Marg MacQuarrie, Constance Maskery, Jill Milkert, Lind Miller,  
Lou Mitchell, Karol Morris, Melissa Nelson, Dorothy Pearson,  
Erik Pedersen, Janet Pink, Melanie Platz, Robin Rohrmoser,  
Robyn Swanson, Camilla Turner, Heather Warren,  
Arlene Wells, Tara Wells

Published by British Columbia Hansard Services, and printed under the authority of the Speaker by the Queen's Printer, Victoria. Rates: single issue, \$2.85; per calendar year, mailed daily, \$298. GST extra. Agent: Crown Publications Inc., 521 Fort St., Victoria, B.C. V8W 1E7. Telephone: (250) 386-4636. Fax: 386-0221.

**[www.leg.bc.ca](http://www.leg.bc.ca)**

Hansard Services publishes transcripts both in print and on the Internet.  
Chamber debates are broadcast on television and webcast on the Internet.