



Second Session, 38th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF
DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, February 21, 2006
Morning Sitting
Volume 6, Number 7

THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

ISSN 0709-1281

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

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SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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CONTENTS

Tuesday, February 21, 2006
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Routine Proceedings

	Page
Throne Speech Debate (<i>continued</i>)	2369
D. Jarvis	
N. Simons	
R. Lee	
G. Gentner	
V. Roddick	

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2006

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

Prayers.

Orders of the Day

Hon. C. Richmond: I call continued debate on the Address in Reply to the throne speech.

Throne Speech Debate (continued)

D. Jarvis: I'm going to continue on with my brilliant speech that I made yesterday when I was cut off by time.

[Applause.]

Thank you for the applause.

I shall not preamble too long, because I have just a few things to say about my riding and everything.

I just wanted to finish off by saying that the fact that the government has put the new Gateway program in is a good move, I think, in the sense that we need to move our goods from across the country — and out of British Columbia, as well — into the foreign lands we are trading with. It's been a long time since we've been able to do it.

Things are catching up on us, as this province was lacking in any thought towards that over the past years. So it's necessary to get the Gateway project going. That's going to cost us some \$3 billion. It's needed, and I applaud the government's vision for doing it, because it will complement the government's other expansions and the upgrade of the Sea to Sky Highway, which is being prepared for the 2010 Winter Olympics. These projects are very significant in the movement of domestic and commercial traffic, as I was saying, and will benefit the whole province.

[1005]

As I've probably mentioned a dozen times in this Legislature before, we in North Vancouver-Seymour ostensibly support the transportation programs, but feel it's not complete, in the sense that the Gateway and the Sea to Sky need to be tied together or linked up at the Second Narrows Bridge, which is at the foot of the Upper Levels Highway leading to the Sea to Sky.

We are faced almost daily with gridlock in this area in the early morning and evening, and it goes on through the day when traffic jams. If there is ever a problem, we have considerably backed-up traffic from all the way across the bridge and on all the side streets leading onto the north quadrant of the Second Narrows Bridge, and traffic is jammed up on the Dollarton Highway in the main street areas.

With the port expanding, the traffic flow is growing worse. Again, as I say, traffic is backing up and is exacerbated by the Sea to Sky Highway, where these people pour in from Whistler. And every hour on the hour B.C. Ferries dumps another 200 or 250 cars into the situation. Then they come down the Cut area and just

start jamming up, and it goes on for hours and hours. Something obviously has to change in this area, or in less than four years we'll just not be able to get the traffic that we want up into the Olympics when it's necessary for the Olympics to start.

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

I have to compliment the government on the transportation end of it. They are putting a \$7 million project into place, probably starting sometime in the next two weeks. It'll relieve the congestion to some degree and supposedly will be completed in a couple of months — around December of this coming year. This is going to result in wider intersections and approaches in the side streets. One of the main things is that they're going to be putting in two dedicated lanes for all that traffic that comes off the Second Narrows Bridge and up into the Capilano College area, and they will not have to interfere with the regular traffic, as has happened in the past.

At the same time, I have to relate that at least one more ferry is desperately needed on the North Shore SeaBus system. As you know, it feeds the traffic across Burrard Inlet. It's been in there since the early 1970s. Probably the main accomplishment of the NDP government of that time was to put in the SeaBus system. But there are only two SeaBuses in existence, and they have been in service now for well over 30 years. So if we are thinking of expansion, let us think about expansion in the SeaBus system, with perhaps more new sites on the North Shore — one in the Seymour area and one in the West Van area — to move more people across Burrard Inlet and to lessen the vehicle traffic on the two bridges.

In fact, one of the cleanest ways to move people is the SeaBus system, so we could use more crossings, as I said. Heaven forbid if we ever have a breakdown of one of the vessels, because what are we going to do with the thousands and thousands of people trying to get across every day? I will be asking the transportation department to give that real good and top consideration.

That's the link we need — that and, at the end of the Second Narrows Bridge, the link between the Gateway program and the Sea to Sky program. It's very tenuous at the moment, and we are appealing to the government to keep that traffic flowing.

Another dramatically changing aspect in our province, and one that this government has been successful in addressing, is the change in the needs of the seniors. Everything we have today as a province was built and paid for by the seniors, apart from the \$38 billion-and-some-odd in debt that the last government has burdened our children with. It was all paid for by those who came before us, who are our seniors today.

[1010]

As a government we do not and will not view seniors as a burden to be parked or housed or farmed out as cheaply as possible. In my constituency right now those people that are seniors are benefiting from the government's belief in supporting seniors in their own

communities and in their own homes. That enables those who earned it through their hard work to enjoy their retirement years as much as possible in their own homes and for as long as possible.

We also have provided assisted-living facilities, and it's one of the real ways that government can contribute to the long-term well-being of an aging population. Cedar Garden in my riding is one up-and-running assisted-living facility, and Lynn Valley Care Centre, contracted by Coastal Health, is in the process of expanding their housing to provide the assisted option, giving more North Shore seniors choices for their housing needs. But as the population ages, the need grows greater, so we must continue on that aspect.

Those people who are lucky enough to be enjoying their retirement years here in B.C. — which is somewhat of a paradise, as some people think — have spent their entire working lives building and contributing to what B.C. is today. We must never forget that. I trust this government never will either.

In closing, I wish to say that I'm prepared to stand up and support the throne speech as it is. I think it's very good for the people of B.C. and the future of B.C.

Deputy Speaker: Member, Sunshine.... Member for Powell River-Sunshine Coast.

N. Simons: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I thought you'd found a new name for me. Sunshine does work.

Allow me, as I gather my thoughts that are hastily scribbled on paper.... I'd just like to start by once again thanking the constituents of Powell River-Sunshine Coast for continuing to have confidence in me to represent their interests here in the House.

It gives me great pleasure to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to start by surprising members opposite by saying some nice things. That was it.

[Laughter.]

No, I'm sorry. I did have some nice things to say.

There were some very positive announcements made. In particular, I'd like to point out research into Alzheimer's. I think it's very important. I would like to have seen, perhaps, that some of the drugs that are approved everywhere else in the country be included for those suffering and for the families of those suffering from Alzheimer's.

I think that the attention suddenly paid to apprenticeship programs is a reflection of the obvious need heard from all sectors of the communities. We did have a very good apprenticeship training program, and I'm hoping that we're on the path towards recovering that which has been lost in the last few dismal years.

The digital media promotion of the cultural components of our communities, I think, serves us in good stead for the future, especially the reference to an enlightened society. I commend the government for paying attention to arts and culture. I think that speaks well for that particular goal.

I also think that the importance of recognizing the work that's been done for the central and north coasts

in terms of protecting the natural assets of this province and the values for future generations....

[Applause.]

That's the sound of one hand clapping.

I would also like to point out that the philosophy that was used in coming up with the land use plan for the Great Bear — ecosystem-based management — should be the same system used when the government decides that the remaining 15 percent of the province that needs a land use plan will get it. I'm hoping that the Sunshine Coast forest district is within the plans of this government.

[1015]

That was fairly positive. I hope that members opposite see that.

[Applause.]

Hon. P. Bell: The sound of two people clapping.

N. Simons: That's nice. I know what the sound of two people clapping is. I'm a classical musician. Thank you.

Madam Speaker, there were some issues that were missed, unfortunately. I believe that some attention could have been paid to the high tuition fees that students in British Columbia are forced to pay. Issues around child poverty obviously mean a lot to everybody on both sides of the House, and I would like to have seen the government actually speak about this issue that needs to be addressed. Of course, services to the vulnerable in our communities, who may not vote in the highest numbers or may not lobby in the highest numbers but reflect the priorities of our society.... I think they could serve to have a little bit more attention paid to them.

Unfortunately, throne speeches, in my experience, are very much like a trailer for a movie. Then you end up going to the movie and realizing that it's not as good as the trailer said it was going to be. In this particular case, we have evidence of past throne speeches that fly in the face of the argument that they do set out the government's agenda. The serious failings of this government, as they relate to dealing with what they claim to have dealt with in the past, are obvious.

Interjection.

N. Simons: I think I heard the member opposite mumble something.

An Hon. Member: He said that this one will win an Academy Award for you.

N. Simons: He's an art critic.

My experience, as I mentioned, is that throne speeches are often misleading, somewhat like advertising, to showcase strengths while perhaps outlining a vision for the province. It's filled with great promises of great wealth and prosperity for all of us. All we have to do is take a little bit of risk, try a little bit harder, run a

little bit faster and get to the front end of the line so that we get the services we need.

Government, I believe, needs to act less like a business with gimmicks and deals that serve to simply highlight what it sees as its strengths. What I would ask this government not to do in the future in their throne speeches is continually pay lip service to the services that our province requires. The role of government is far more than just boosterism for the programs that they implement based on the advice of their friends and at the expense of everyone else.

Don't tell us about making first nations child welfare at the forefront of your agenda, as you did 14 months before Sherry died, or that you'll "enhance resources and authority for front-line social workers to properly protect children at risk" when there was absolutely no intention of doing so. Please don't feed us lines like that in future throne speeches.

Since then this government has continually underfunded first nations child welfare agencies. And I know. Training for first nations child welfare agencies is complex. It's troubled. It's fraught with conflict, with year-to-year funding that provides absolutely no stability to the trainer, to those who are trained or to the first nations agencies that rely on having people available to do their work. Don't tell us that you'll enhance resources while at the same time you come in the back door of the first nations child welfare agency and ask them to report on every 15 minutes of contact with children in their care.

[1020]

Wasteful management, bad management. That characterizes this government's approach to first nations child welfare. At the same time that they're saying they're going to be pushing and helping first nations deal with child welfare issues, they ask them to take over full authority before the capacity has been built, before the infrastructure is present. That's bad management, and if this kind of bad management is reflected in any other sector — in the mining industry, the forestry industry, the fisheries industry — you would have an outcry.

But the people subjected to these draconian expectations are the voiceless, those without the ability to speak strongly against the inappropriate government policies. So don't tell me about enhancing resources when there's no intention of doing so.

The regionalization process, which is actually touted as a positive thing in this throne speech.... I challenge the government to find anyone in child welfare committed to first nations child welfare autonomy to say that the regionalization process is either well thought out, based on consultation or appropriate for the future of first nations child welfare. There are deals that are made from political people to political people, but they have very little to do with the problems on the ground.

Don't tell us again.... I asked this government not to say that they "will offer more options to provide safe care for children within the environment of the extended family." Seven months before Sherry died, this was stated in the throne speech. Seven months before

Sherry died, the government committed to offer more options. This was an option, the option provided, but it was hastily thought out, written on the back of a napkin. That's no way to govern the province. That's no way to manage child welfare. That is not exactly a good example of management practice that I'd like to see anywhere, let alone child welfare.

On the same day this government announced that they would provide more options, they passed legislation, on the advice of their own experts, calling for the elimination of the children's commissioner — on the very same day.

We've learned nothing. We've learned nothing, and every single social worker in the system, whether they're ministry social workers or child welfare professionals with aboriginal agencies, are stifled by a management system that doesn't allow them to make suggestions on how to improve services. They're subjected to a government's across-the-board gimmick of 30-percent cuts in a 90-day plan from the golden decades. Meanwhile, the little children, the vulnerable children, and the families who are vulnerable and without services now are left to wonder if this throne speech has anything to do with them. I'm saying that I'm challenging the government to make it have something to do with them. Take appropriate action.

I'm sick and tired of hearing how we're number one in this and number one in that, the best at this and the best at that. We are confident. We should be proudly confident that we're doing well. We're doing well for a number of reasons. Maybe 5 percent of them have to do with this government.

We're prospering in this province. We're prospering at a time when we look around us and see others who aren't prospering. It's our duty as elected representatives to speak out about that. It's our duty and the duty of government to make considered choices that will not only benefit people in this province but will benefit those who we never hear from.

We are number one in child poverty in British Columbia — shameful, absolutely. We have the lowest unemployment rate in history and the highest child poverty rate.

[1025]

I'm suggesting that when government members fly off to Norway and to Sweden and to France, while they're there, perhaps they'll step outside their hotel and wander down to a government office and find out how, through good government programs, they can protect children who are living in poverty. Maybe they can learn something and bring it back here. Give them another option while they're visiting and finding out what we know about our Canadian health care system.

While they're over in France and Norway and trying to figure out from the United Kingdom what they can do — assuming they haven't already come up with their ideas, assuming that there aren't professionals here in Canada who have repeatedly called for changes to be made to the health care system; I'd name the Romanow commission, just for one — there are other things that can be learned. I'm hoping that government

representatives will take that opportunity. Norway, Sweden and France all have programs that address child poverty.

The throne speech and the actions of government following the throne speech have to do with accountability. We hear a lot about accountability from this government. Open cabinet meetings — hmm. I don't believe that the actions of this government reflect the words they have about their accountability.

I'd like to see Mr. Premier show good management. Tell the people the economic numbers when they're good. Boast about the job creation and the future of prosperity for all of us. But as soon as something bad happens and the true test of accountability comes forward.... As soon as something bad happened, this government ducked and covered. They inundate us with a blizzard of inquiries and investigations, with the primary purpose of letting us forget, letting us put off, letting us delay hearing the recommendations that we know from previous experience they'll come up with.

I believe the government side knows what I'm talking about. While the business plan of this government was to train managers in finding efficiencies, cutting corners, figuring out ways of getting more for less or of giving out less, at the same time, they were rewriting regulations and standards that had been the result of long and careful consideration and deliberation. This government learned nothing from the Gove commission. The first page of that report has more answers in it than this government suggests.

It makes me wonder whether, when I was a social worker with the ministry and Justice Gove was doing his important work into figuring out what needed to be changed in the system.... While I was the subject, along with all of my colleagues in the ministry, of suggestions and innuendo that somehow social workers were not doing their jobs, the Gove commission came up with recommendations. That wasn't a political game. I hope that wasn't a political game. I hope that government actually was interested in finding out. I think they were. They developed some programs that were important — for example, a children's commissioner.

The managers in child welfare, I believe, were expected to sacrifice their own dignity and professional judgment in order to meet the unreasonable demands of the government, whose agenda was set by the Premier. Absolutely shocking, Madam Speaker. Hasty tax cuts, hasty cuts to programs — that's what happens. We've learned. We haven't learned well enough, obviously.

Interjections.

[1030]

N. Simons: While it's possible that, put together, two members opposite can come up with an original thought, in this particular case the tax cuts were ill-advised, considering the results that they would have. In this case the immediate attempt for self-gratification clouded judgment when it came to their responsibility in governing our society.

They learned nothing from Matthew Vaudreuil, and I'm saddened to say that the legacy we're talking about coming out of this case of the young girl in Port Alberni is the second time we have to learn this. Why do we need two legacies of children when the government had the answers the first time? That's shameful, and that's partly why I'm here.

Two years ago I was a member of no political party. I saw a direct relationship between government policy and the well-being of children, and I thought that this is obvious. Something has to be done. Then when the opportunity arises, when answers are given to the House, the first response is to impugn the credibility of those opposite. That's shameful, Madam Speaker. The second thing they do is start another commission of inquiry — a third, a fourth, a fifth. Don't release the first one; the answers might be too damning.

There's a problem in this province. There's an obvious solution to a portion of that problem. We don't need eight investigations to know what the solution is. Child welfare represents our approach to the most vulnerable in this society. We are wealthy. We have resources that others in the world want. We have a natural beauty that others want to come and visit. What they will visit is a province where there's a homelessness problem like never before, where there are people on the street and where there's a fear reaction to crime.

These two images don't match, and the reason is a lack of accountability — a lack of will to make difficult decisions as they relate to looking after the vulnerable in our society. They will argue that a tax cut will increase investment, thus increasing revenue for government, thus improving programs.

Well, we're waiting. We're waiting as people on income assistance are living below the poverty line — anybody's measure of a poverty line. I don't want to get into the semantics of what poor is, but when you see the face of children who are hungry in school, you know what poor is, and the statistics don't matter. It's government's responsibility.

The one thing that this government manages well is public relations, communication. They've got the staff. They've got the resources. Despite the vision of the government, many people are fooled.

I heard other members opposite talk about common sense, how British Columbians — you know, regular folks, unlike us — are interested in commonsense solutions, answers that they have, sitting around a doughnut shop having a maple dip and a double-double. I heard that referred to a few times. People there know what the government has to do. People in those doughnut shops throughout the province know that this government failed, and it's making it worse every time a new commission of investigation is set up.

That's not accountability. That's not open government. It's certainly not what we expect as British Columbians, nor should we want to expect that.

[1035]

Let me just address the issue of the children's commissioner. The excuse used many times, not stated in the throne speech of 2002.... The purpose of the chil-

dren's commissioner is well known. The argument to eliminate it was that it was duplicating others' work, that recommendations were redundant and that there was nothing really more to learn from having an independent children's commissioner.

Well, that flies in the face of the fact that the public record shows that the so-called independent investigator — the first one — into the death of the young child in Port Alberni apparently made 12 recommendations, nine of which were implemented immediately. It's just one example of a flagrant hole in the argument that it was duplicating others' work.

As much as I'm hopeful about the things in the throne speech that indicate the recognition of the need to promote the arts, the need to improve quality of life for British Columbia citizens, I need to wait and see what this government produces. I need to wait and see that those who are forgotten or lost or seemingly unimportant are finally dealt with.

I look forward to providing constructive criticism, as I have in the past — perhaps find that there is more that we can agree on than we disagree on. I hope that the respectful tone.... We're not looking for fault of individuals. We're looking at improving systems, improving legislation and improving the way we as legislators do our work.

The legacies that we should leave after we're finished serving in this House should be a better quality of life for our citizens here. I'm proud to be British Columbian; I'm proud to be Canadian.

By the way, Canada won 3 to 2 today. As the sports critic, I thought I should point that out.

J. Horgan: How'd they play?

N. Simons: They played fairly well. The ice is too big.

Interjections.

N. Simons: I'm being heckled from my side again.

In closing, I would just like to reiterate that yes, we are experiencing prosperity in this province. We are finding all of the blessings that have been bestowed upon us. We're taking full advantage of them. Let's make sure that the cracks in the floor aren't wide enough to let the vulnerable fall through, especially now that we have the resources to prevent that from happening.

R. Lee: It's my privilege to rise to respond to the Speech from the Throne again. Whenever I stand up in the House, I always remind myself that it's the people of my riding who give me the opportunity to serve, and it's a great honour for me to represent my constituents of Burnaby North in this Legislative Assembly.

The throne speech reminds us that our province will be 150 years old in two years. In world history 150 years is not a long period. Countries like Greece, India and China all have a much longer history of civilization, and their people have deep roots in their respective lands. However, many British Columbians are also

deeply rooted in this province. The ancestors of our aboriginal people have resided in this land for thousands and thousands of years.

[1040]

While we celebrate our sesquicentennial in two years, British Columbians will indeed also celebrate our national heritage, our cultural diversity, our achievements and our future. In the past four years alone our province has accomplished many goals and has reached many milestones which are the envy of our fellow Canadians.

Recently the Conference Board rated our health care system the best in Canada. We are opening more post-secondary spaces than other provinces. We are leading the country in job creation. We are gaining again in interprovincial migration, and we have the lowest unemployment rate on record.

As the world evolves around us, we must not, however, stand still and be satisfied with what we have achieved. "Change is the only constant." Heraclitus made this comment about life in Greece 2,500 years ago. What was true then is also true today in British Columbia.

While we are leading Canada in our health care services, Canada's health care is only ranked 30th in the world — way behind some European countries. I'm pleased that this government is taking the lead in engaging the public in the discussion of the future of health care in Canada, while having an open mind to learn from other countries.

This week, after the closing of the Winter Olympics in Italy, the Premier and Minister of Health will go to visit a few European countries to study their health care systems. It will be of great interest to British Columbians — the question of why France is ranked the best of the world in health care.

The throne speech announced that a foundation for health care innovation and renewal will be created in this province in the next few months to examine successful health care models around the world. Through learning from others' successes and through real dialogue with the public, it's possible for us not only to bring benefits to patients in this province but also to help Canada as a country move forward in health care services.

Currently each province practises different service delivery under the Canada Health Act. Our province is leading the country in many aspects of health care services. B.C. is the leader in cancer care in Canada and North America. According to the 2005 estimates in *Canadian Cancer Statistics*, women in B.C. have the lowest incidence rate for breast cancer and are tied with other provinces for the lowest incidence rates for colorectal cancer, cervical cancer, kidney cancer and cancer of the uterus. Men in B.C. have the lowest incidence rate for lung cancer, colorectal cancer, kidney cancer, oral cancer, brain cancer and cancer of the larynx.

British Columbians continue to have the lowest overall mortality rate for cancers in this country. Since at least 50 percent of all cancers are due to preventable

factors, efforts to learn and disseminate information about these factors will bring the benefit of preventing cancers from occurring.

To this end, I am pleased to see that our government has committed to work with the Canadian Cancer Society — B.C. and Yukon Division to establish a research chair in primary prevention of cancer. I personally have participated in many fundraising events organized by the Canadian Cancer Society. Last week I had the pleasure to join the society's volunteers and sponsors to kick off this year's fundraising campaign in the Asian community.

[1045]

B.C. has added much diagnostic equipment since 2001. Eight new CT scanners were acquired, and four more are being added over the next two years. At the same time the number of MRI scanners was more than doubled. Last year the province purchased its first publicly funded PET scanner. When I worked in TRIUMF, I always heard many good comments about the UBC PET scanner, which was designed by TRIUMF professionals. This tomography imaging technique is superior compared to other devices in studying the activity of the brain. As a result of investment in these scanning devices, our province is performing tens of thousands more CT and MRI examinations, bringing quicker medical diagnostics to our patients.

In fact, many more surgeries were done over the last four years. Knee replacements have increased by more than 65 percent. Hip replacements have increased by more than 35 percent. Cataract surgeries have increased by more than 20 percent, and angioplasties have increased by more than 52 percent. This is a result of increasing investment in health care, which now stands at \$11.7 billion, compared to \$8.7 billion in 2000.

One of the most important factors for improving the health care system of British Columbia is the increase in health care human resources. Our government is on schedule to double the number of first-year medical doctor spaces, from 128 four years ago to 256 by next year. The number of entry-level residency positions will also be increased, in steps, to 256 by 2011.

As a matter of fact, we already have one of the highest rates of physicians per capita in Canada. In 2003 we had 200 physicians per 100,000 population, while the Canadian average was 187 physicians per 100,000 people. Since 2001, Madam Speaker, 1,300 more nurses were licensed to work in B.C.; 2,500 additional nursing education spaces were added; and an estimated 6,500 more nurses — including RNs, RPNs and LPNs — are expected to graduate between 2002 and 2006.

As our population is aging, it is expected that the demand for health care services will increase substantially. Today one in seven British Columbians is a senior, but by 2030 the proportion of seniors to the total population will be almost doubled, to one in four. Without changes, our health care system, which now consumes 43 percent of the provincial budget, will not be sustainable. It's now time to have a direct, open dialogue with the public on exactly what we mean by uni-

versality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability and public administration under the Canada Health Act, as well as how to achieve sustainability in our health care system, so that British Columbians can continue to be the healthiest in Canada. In a dynamically changing world, it's always a challenge to maintain sustainability in a system.

[1050]

Besides health care, the education system is another sector that we must invest in so as to harness the power of new knowledge and the creativity of British Columbians. New knowledge and technology are changing our world day by day. B.C. has been a leader in many fields of the high-tech industries, but we must increase our investment in education, research and development in order to maintain and advance our advantages. Modern research and development depend on the clustering of experts, on supporting facilities and on teamwork.

British Columbians have achieved a lot in the last few years in life sciences and biotechnology. Our genome research team was the first in the world to decode the SARS virus. Our research in the design of devices to help people with disabilities is one of the best in the world. Last year I had the opportunity to see a presentation of the Neil Squire Foundation, which showcases top-notch research in using signals from the brain — brain activities — to direct devices to move around at the will of a quadriplegic, with a high degree of accuracy. It's just amazing to see what technology can do to better our lives in the future.

This government is going to work with B.C.'s technology industry to invest more in research and development, with the aim to cultivate more discoveries and the commercialization of the inventions. The B.C. Hub strategy will be developed to transform our approach to research, commercialization and capital expansion so that new knowledge and processes can work their way to our natural resource industries and our manufacturing economy.

I'm particularly impressed with the commitment of government to the establishment of a new B.C. foundation for natural resources and engineering research, which will support advanced training, research and development; technology transfer; and commercialization in natural resources, engineering and applied sciences. It shows that this government is firmly committed to take on research and development and the application of technology as our strategy to diversify our heavy dependence on the natural resource sector.

B.C. is blessed with its abundance of natural resources: forests, natural gas, agriculture, minerals and aquacultural products. However, we all know about the cyclical nature of the natural resource market. It goes up and down depending on world supply and demand. A balanced and diversified approach will ensure that British Columbians have a better opportunity to enjoy a sustainable economy.

I'm excited to see that alternative energy will form an integral part of our government's expanded energy vision. Wind and tidal power are some of the alterna-

tive energies which are increasingly becoming competitive as the price of oil and natural gas rise. These kinds of green energy generation will enhance the sustainability of our environment. Besides these sources of power generation, the best energy source is actually power saved by conservation. Increasing the efficiency of motors, engines, lighting devices and heating systems can lead to the reduction of the consumption of energy.

With the lowest unemployment rate on record and the highest investor confidence level in Canada, our province is very attractive to Canadians from other provinces who are looking for opportunities to better their own lives and those of their families. Consequently, more and more people are moving to British Columbia. We must be prepared for this welcoming trend.

[1055]

The power of a strong economy also leads us to a shortage of skilled labourers. In the throne speech this government indicated that it's going to put in more resources to expand the Industry Training Authority programs in trades training and apprenticeships. We have heard from many employers that they are willing to take in more trainees and apprentices, but they need to have some supports in their efforts and investment. It's encouraging to see that this government is moving in this direction.

The importance of higher education and skill training has never been so pressing for British Columbians. When our unemployment rate fell below 5 percent, the shortage of skilled labourers has increasingly induced pressures in our economy.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

We must also work towards one of our five goals, which is to increase British Columbians' education and literacy level overall. Many young seniors and the ESL community could benefit tremendously if programs of adult education can be enhanced further.

As a member of the Legislature's Select Standing Committee on Education, I am pleased to see that this committee was charged yesterday to have the mandate to find effective strategies to address the specific challenge of adult literacy and to find out successful strategies from other jurisdictions on the promotion of adult literacy. I'm sure the findings would be of great interest to British Columbians and will contribute to the improvement of literacy in this province.

In our education system the most fundamental element is K-to-12 education. Recently our government has put more resources into early childhood learning as well. The throne speech reiterated our aspiration to make public education more relevant to students' needs and more accountable at every level. Local school boards must be accountable when class-size limits are violated, and parents must be given greater access to information in education.

All partners in education must be engaged in discussions on how to improve our system. We have great

expectations for the new Learning Round Table as well as the upcoming teachers congress. Asking questions by all parties and attempting to provide solutions to improve the system will certainly raise the level of discussion, and it will be easier to reach consensus.

As we embark on building up our human resources, we must also realize that many of our physical infrastructures need to be renewed and expanded to take advantage of our geographical location. British Columbia is the gateway to the Asia-Pacific, because our province is the only province in Canada facing the Pacific Ocean. Our seaports and airports have the distinct advantage of being the closest to many Asia-Pacific countries compared to the rest of Canada and the states south of our border. Situated between the emerging Asia-Pacific economy and the large, traditional U.S. economy, our economy must be strategically and competitively positioned to take advantage of our geographical location.

As China, India, Japan, Korea and other Asian countries look for goods and services from abroad, we would like them to consider B.C. products. When they go for trade, investment, visits and immigration, we also would like them to consider B.C. first. As we anticipate more flow of people and goods from Asia-Pacific countries, we must increase our investment in the transportation systems — such as seaports, rail networks and roads — from all directions. The proposed Gateway transportation program is crucial to our Asia-Pacific strategy.

[1100]

Next, let's look at exports from B.C. From 1995 to 2004 our exports to China have increased from \$501 million to \$1.7 billion. Exports to Mexico have increased from \$55 million to \$211 million. The exports to India have increased three times, from \$77 million to \$134 million.

How do we move these goods? Of course, it's through our transportation networks. Last June the B.C. Progress Board published an interim benchmark report with a special focus on B.C. trade and emerging Asian opportunities. It's a very well-researched paper. I would like to share its conclusion:

The most pressing challenge is ensuring our transportation infrastructure can handle the current flow of goods, imports and exports. B.C.'s lower mainland ports and the Port of Prince Rupert — with their closer proximity to China relative to other North American jurisdictions — make B.C. a favourable shipping point for goods, imports and exports. Continuous efforts to ensure these "national" and "provincial" assets meet challenges and opportunities presented by increased trade with China will be imperative. In a similar vein, liberalization of air policy and the conclusion of further bilateral air transportation agreements with China, the United States and other foreign nations will also be critical for ensuring British Columbia is positioned to take advantage of Asian trade opportunities.

As parliamentary secretary for the Asia-Pacific Initiative, I would like to stress the importance of the proposed Gateway transportation system. This Gateway transportation program, which includes the North Fraser perimeter road, the Pitt River Bridge, the South

Fraser perimeter road connecting Deltaport, the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge, the widening of Highway 1 from Vancouver to Langley and a \$50 million investment in cycling infrastructure, provides us very significant improvements to the public transportation infrastructures. The opening of our transportation network will not only reduce congestion and meet the needs of our growing economy; it will also set the foundation for increasing our Asia-Pacific trade and supporting the growing population.

The sustainable development of our economy depends on two important factors: competitiveness and productivity. Are we competitive in the Asia-Pacific regions compared to the United States, Australia and New Zealand? This question may be answered by the Asia-Pacific Trade Council and the B.C. Competition Council in the near future.

However, a few directions have been set in the throne speech. The government will intensify its efforts to open up new Asian markets in forestry, energy, mining, tourism, education and manufacturing through trade missions and new on-site presence in key strategic locations.

As we face the epidemic of pine beetle and softwood disputes with the United States, we must continue to diversify our market in forest products. Marketing efforts such as the expansion of the Dream Home China project in Beijing and Guangzhou will bear fruits in the future. As countries like China expand their economies, their demand for energy, minerals and metallurgical coal will intensify. We are well positioned to increase exports.

[1105]

As implementation of the approved-destination status between China and Canada will soon become a reality, we must prepare for the anticipated increase in tourists. As international students from Korea, Japan, China and India continue to come to this province to study, we must work with the federal government to implement a more effective visa approval process.

As our economy becomes more international, bidirectional activities in investment, manufacturing and development will intensify. Are we prepared for this? Our government has taken steps to address some of these issues.

We will invest in languages, art and culture to enrich our heritages and create a strong identity for British Columbia. We will develop our new Pacific programs to enhance our knowledge of the Pacific region. We will offer multilingual government services websites. We will encourage the study of languages of the Pacific countries, such as Mandarin, Japanese, Punjabi and Korean. We will introduce the One World scholarship to help post-secondary students to pursue study abroad. We will support exchanges of students, and we will initiate museums to showcase Asia-Pacific trade and culture, aboriginal art and culture and women's history as well.

As we develop the Asia-Pacific strategy, we also, at the same time, become more self-aware and more concerned about the branding of British Columbia. We can

take great pride that the spirit bear is now a symbol for British Columbia. It symbolizes the spirit of British Columbia, with its connection to aboriginal heritage and the beauty and mystery of our land. The richness of natural resources, the clustering of talents and the strong desire to excel will bring out the best in British Columbians.

Our government will intensify its efforts to improve the services to children and families, to combat substance abuse and crime, to forge a new relationship with first nations and to provide new options for housing.

Although the high school graduation rate of aboriginal students has increased over the years, there is still much room for improvement. For the past few years I have regularly attended the welcoming ceremonies for the new students and the school-leaving ceremonies for graduates of the Native Education Centre. Those are always moving moments. Given the right environment and the proper supports, the aboriginal students can reach a level of achievement even beyond their own expectations.

Last month I attended a graduation ceremony of a first nations piping program, together with my colleague from Vancouver-Burrard. I received an e-mail just last week from ACCESS saying that all of the students have secured...

Deputy Speaker: Member.

R. Lee: ...apprenticeships. This is a great success — a collaboration between BCIT, ACCESS and the Native Education Centre.

Mr. Speaker, time is limited. I would quote: "Change is the only constant." Sustainability is the key when we strive to achieve our five great goals.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, member.
The member for Delta North.

G. Gentner: Thank you, hon. Speaker. I certainly won't follow the member opposite's example of trying to filibuster your own throne speech.

[1110]

I rise, also, to give my condolences to the member for West Vancouver-Capilano and his family. We on this side of the House wish him a speedy recovery. He's given me some words of advice. I remember having a seven-minute discussion in the House on privatization, and the professor from Harvard got up and certainly gave me a lesson as well. So we all look forward to his long, long welcome back.

This throne speech is large and encompassing, and without question the devil will be seen in the details. I expect a very busy number of months here in Victoria to put the legislation that's going to be put forward from the government under a microscope. I do want to begin the discussion on the throne speech relative to the Gateway program — the \$1.5 billion program for the Port Mann Bridge and the \$800 million program for the South Fraser perimeter road in particular.

I was at a forum with TransLink about two Saturdays ago with most of the councillors and MLAs and

MPs south of the Fraser, including His Worship the Hon. Sam Sullivan from Vancouver. There does still seem to be some consternation from the north side of the Fraser relative to the proposed expansion or twinning of the Port Mann.

Before I talk briefly about that, I want to make mention, though, that in the throne speech there's no mention of a sort of boil in my community. That is the border infrastructure program that had been promised before relative to, of course, 77nd Avenue and Highway 91. The minister made mention that it was coming on stream, and yet it seems to have been delayed. Our concern in my community was that if you're going to do it, it should be done right.

What was proposed by this government is a ramping overpass system at that interchange whereby there would be no access for people from the Surrey-North Delta corridor to Highway 91, to be able to access that highway southbound. Likewise, northbound on Highway 91 there would be no access onto 72nd Avenue eastbound into Surrey.

Today the ministry and the government have not corrected that problem. By not doing so, when this project comes on stream, we will see further rat-running through my neighbourhoods because they're not going to be able to access that important Highway 91 corridor.

I know the Minister of Transportation has indicated that there will be money from the border infrastructure program for his community, particularly that in Highway 15. I do admit that there are some major truck issues there. We have to understand that in my community, we are heavily impacted as well.

Going back to the Port Mann situation, at the forum that was held in Surrey two Saturdays ago in the morning, Mr. Proudfoot was there. I had earlier heard on the previous Thursday the minister's view on the twinning of the Port Mann. What was discussed, of course, was this notion of tolling. The government's position on tolling is one whereby if there's no alternative, there will be no tolling. The example given, of course, is the Sea to Sky Highway. Because there's no alternative along that corridor, there will be no tolling. However, at Port Mann, it's the rationale. Therefore, there will be tolling on that corridor.

What the government fails to realize is that if B.C. Rail had remained in the public purview, commuter service could be seen as an alternative and provide good access to the Squamish Valley. It's a real shame that the province has basically sold that piece of infrastructure as though it was a flea market.

[1115]

The question of tolls on the Port Mann is a problem in my community — namely, because the alternative for the toll evaders is probably running through my neighbourhood in North Delta. In order to avoid those tolls, they will find their way along the new South Fraser perimeter road, through North Delta, Annieville and other neighbourhoods onto the Alex Fraser and continue their commute.

Also, the toll evaders have another option, and that's the Pattullo Bridge. With no upgrades to Pattullo

— and it's a matter of major safety issues on Pattullo; we've seen fatalities galore on that corridor — we seem to be pushing the problem onto other neighbourhoods, and that is unacceptable. I think the tolling policy put forward by the government is wrong and should be rethought — not punish neighbourhoods that will be impacted by this shallow, short-sighted policy.

I want to talk briefly about the South Fraser perimeter road. I had been on Delta council for many, many years, and we had met with the Gateway program, in camera, etc. Of course, it's all out in the public purview now. We had met Mr. Proudfoot and the engineers. Delta's original position was quite a bit different than what we are seeing today.

There has been a lack of consultation, irregardless of what the government side will say. The government side, of course, will insist that consultation has occurred, but there's a big difference between real consultation and information meetings. That seems to be the route of the government, in its spin to sell the project. I remember sitting down for many, many hours with the engineers, with Delta council. Delta council, of course, had a different view of the matter, and that was not the bypass through Ladner.

The government was looking at two separate options: the south option versus the north option that would surround a ring of fire of traffic around the community of east Ladner. Consequently, Delta's position was to say: "Well, let's do it right." There was another option there, and that was to possibly upgrade Highway 17, with a probable underpass — albeit it's a floodplain, but for heaven's sake, we have seen the success of the Massey Tunnel — instead of spilling out with more bypasses on our valuable farmland. That was the position of Delta a few years back. Unfortunately, the government did not necessarily listen to that consultation and went along with its own plan.

Some people will say, "Well, this is a good quick fix," and there could be some rationale behind that. However, let's look at the success or the failures of bypasses in general. We know that 20-some-odd years ago there was an engineering feat called the Langley bypass. Where are we today with the Langley bypass? It's created nothing but urban sprawl. In many ways, with all due respect to the retailers there, it has turned into a warehouse ghetto. It is congested. It has created an artery that's plugged, and it's a lot more difficult today to use Highway 10 and find your way onto the 401 than it was before it was built.

This is an example. There are very few examples in North America and in Europe where the bypass has been successful. We are slowly seeing the deterioration of flowing traffic along the Mary Hill example. The bypass example, in my estimation, is not always the answer. It has caused sprawl, and I would anticipate that probably in another ten years the Ladner bypass will see the exact same thing as we're seeing in Langley. We will see development there, and we will see further deterioration of the farmland.

It seems to me this government has put farmland and the protection of soil-based farming in abeyance.

We know that hundreds of, if not a thousand, acres will be under the developer's knife in the next number of years, under the ALR.

[1120]

We've also seen, over the last tenure of this government, its order-in-council that took away Delta's very prudent agricultural bylaw. Now it's very much controlled, by the draconian nature, strictly by the ministry of farmland. That is not to say that I am opposed to the right-to-farm legislation. It needs some fixing. However, it's been forced upon Delta now for over three and a half years, and it's time that the government walked the walk. Do the right thing and start talking to the people of Delta.

I want to briefly explain the history of the South Fraser perimeter road, particularly in my community in the North Delta area. There was talk some time ago about how it was going to find its way along from the east Ladner bypass. It's now in the stages to go ahead. It will be going along the Crescent Slough area, a very valuable farming part of our community.

There's quite a lot of historical importance there that's going to have to be protected. The Chinese, who helped build the canneries and worked in canneries along the Fraser River, in the 19th century had one day off. They spent their time in the bush in Burns Bog, right where this corridor is going to go. If you do a little excavation, you'll find all sorts of little things and details there. If the government does take this position on this bypass, I hope that they will do the proper thing and recognize it as an archaeological site, excavate it and document it.

The road was to take quite a big swath out of Burns Bog. It still does impact Burns Bog. Those impact studies are still underway, and we don't know how it will eventually affect it. I do know there is a transition zone, the lag in Burns Bog, where the nutrient level is completely changed by any type of development. The water mound, the most essential part of Burns Bog, is relatively close to where the curvature of the road from the farmland into the industrial heartland of Tilbury could be very much impacted.

I would be very interested to know what the environmental assessment studies will reveal in this proposal, and I am very dubious whether or not this road will actually be built any time before 2012. The road itself follows its way through Tilbury Industrial Park, and it had been suggested that it should take the corridor along the railway tracks through the industrial area, which still does have quite a lot of setbacks to accompany it. However, the government has decided to take the southern route, which is the closest route along Burns Bog. That, too, will have a severe impact, particularly to the hydrological nature of how the ecosystem works.

Interestingly enough, some time ago the Fraser docks people and the Fraser harbour commission said they needed land just before the Alex Fraser Bridge — I'm speaking about the west side of the bridge — in order to develop further intermodal capacity. What happened there was that it had a major impact on that part of the bog. Through the negotiations of trying to

purchase the bog, it's quite interesting that part of the 500 acres of the pristine part of Burns Bog wasn't purchased by the government, because in my estimation, it was always part of the plan to develop that capacity for the Fraser harbour commission.

So here we are, hon. Speaker. The new road will find its way to the Alex Fraser Bridge, which is known by the engineers as the "bubble zone." It's the bubble zone, because no one knows where to go from here. Is it going to expropriate a lumber mill there? Will it find its way onto a very narrow part of River Road? Of course, it will probably expropriate a large part of the commercial district, as well, to find its way into my community of North Delta, primarily the Sunbury area.

[1125]

This whole study has been undergoing now, we have heard, for many years — up to 20 years. There was quite a thorough study, called the Delcan study, completed in 1992, which made the recommendation to go ahead with the South Fraser perimeter way.

It recognized huge impacts — environmentally, to heritage, to the history, to the residents — and that's been sitting on the shelf ever since. The impacts to my neighbourhood, Sunbury and Annieville, are extreme. We are looking at a four-lane freeway or turnpike that will cut its way along the riparian habitat of the Fraser River where there is eel grass and very important habitat that's interrelated with the river ecosystem. We know that there are several ravines — there are the Knudson Ravine, the Collings Ravine, the McAdam Ravine and two other ravines that feed into that estuary, a very important part of the ecosystem.

Along the McAdam Ravine in particular, at its mouth, is of course the second-oldest archaeological site in the history of North America, called Glenrose. The first nation peoples were located there about 10,000 to 8,000 years ago. It's well documented. It is a major indigenous people's heritage site. It was impacted when the building of the Alex Fraser Bridge was completed. The government of the day decided to not excavate and do the job right but do nothing less than put boulders on the site to try and preserve it.

When you go up the McAdam Ravine — and the McAdam Ravine will be wiped out by this corridor — you'll find artifacts that show that in the summer the village was on the riverfront and that in the winter it moved up the ravine and had its settlement there. The fishing occurred on the river, and the elk hunting was done in the winter. The women lived up the ravine that will be totally destroyed by this bridge, and the males, primarily the fishers, lived on the riverfront.

This is a very historical area where there are some homes that now could be expropriated. They have not been allowed to develop, because there are sacred burial grounds there. It's interesting enough that the people along that corridor have not been able to build homes, and yet the government has decided that they're going to go ahead and wipe it all out with a freeway.

That's not to say that from a practical, pragmatic perspective — and the demands of the economy — we

can't find a compromise, but there has been a lack of consultation with the residents, to talk to the first nations, and a lack of consultation with the environmental NGOs on this proposal. When we're going again to do some consultation, the South Fraser perimeter road people, the Gateway people, have agreed to have open houses. But they're having it in Surrey; they're having it everywhere but in Delta. Isn't that funny how the residential area that is going to be most severely impacted is the one area the Gateway program has refused to sit down and have a meeting with?

I find that quite unacceptable. The residents have several times said: "Okay, there's got to be an option here." The residents said: "What about a tunnel?" After all, we've seen the Cassiar Connector. Way back in 1957 — for heaven's sake, almost 50 years — we saw the Massey Tunnel being built, a major environmental achievement to do something along that riverfront. Of course the province will have none of that.

Member of Parliament John Cummins and others have suggested it. The province won't listen to our Member of Parliament. The municipality of Delta has said: "Okay, let's look at a different option here. Maybe we can build a type of snowshed on top of the corridor to green it a bit and temper the air pollution that will rise up into the residential areas." So far Mr. Proudfoot and the Gateway community have said that is not practical. So the minds have been made up by the province, and they seem to be very reluctant to listen to people.

[1130]

There is another solution here, of course. It's very much dependent on the marketplace itself. The provincial government, I think, is very boisterous about what the future holds, but I don't think they're really looking at what the real market will show relative to the Asia market.

When we go into the throne speech, which talks about the gateway, it states: "The world's reorientation to the Asia-Pacific is one of the central transformational changes in our time.... The Pacific gateway strategy is about opening up our ports, airports, rail networks and roads from all points east to all points west." The throne speech embraces the global economy, but what it doesn't say is that globalization can not only open our ports, but it can also close them as well.

Let's talk about transformational change. I would like to refer to a *Delta Optimist* report that appeared this week. "The Fraser-Surrey docks has lost 70 percent of its container business because of a decision made by a shipping line halfway around the world. The European-based shipping giant Hapag-Lloyd purchased Canadian-based CP Ships last December. Hapag-Lloyd, based in Hanover, has earnings before tax of over €278 million, and they know the container business."

As global forces are changing the shipping map of the world — and the government knew Canadian Pacific had sold its ships — decisions made in Germany will decide the fate of our ports. In fact, today in the United States the Americans are quite concerned about the outsourcing of their port business. They're going to lose port business to places like Dubai in Saudi Arabia.

In fact, the port of Dubai is in the process of purchasing P&O.

The global economy has major impacts here and abroad. Hapag-Lloyd first made an offer to purchase CP Ships last August for €1.7 billion. On December 15 CP shareholders approved the purchase. I know that it's a hard pill for a government that believes in globalization, but we all know that a little blip in the commodity market will have major impacts. We will see, most likely, that today's budget is a budget that will not reduce sales taxes because of the uncertainty of the gas market.

CP had two container services calling at Fraser-Surrey docks, but now those containers will arrive at Deltaport and Vanterm. What does Hapag-Lloyd know that the government doesn't...? After all, it's the rationale for the \$800 million South Fraser perimeter road to facilitate a growing Fraser-Surrey docks.

Surrey President and Chief Executive Officer Gino Crisanti confirmed last week that the decision of Hapag-Lloyd to discontinue the CP service resulted in "significant job losses, a substantial loss of our container business." He goes on further to say in the article that "this has resulted in an across-the-board job loss, both in union and management. It's a 40-percent cut in employees."

What does this mean for container traffic at Deltaport? According to Capt. Norman Stark, president and chief executive officer of TSI, the company that operates the Deltaport container, there will be increases in container traffic at Deltaport and Vanterm. Crisanti said the decision was not a reflection of the port and the ability of current infrastructure. "In our case, it was a global merger," he said. Stark agreed, knowing that Deltaport has had shipping lines leave due to mergers around the globe.

[1135]

Crisanti emphasized that Fraser-Surrey dock still has a healthy break-bulk business, which includes steel and lumber trade. This is a good thing. But what about containers, the principal notion behind building new infrastructure for the movement of goods in the Gateway plan? The reality is that we have two ports competing in the lower mainland and competing for the same infrastructure money, but the shipping companies abroad will decide where they can best locate. If they decide that shaving an extra hour going up the Fraser River is a good savings, if they decide another hour going to Burrard Inlet is a good savings, they will go — you know where — before Deltaport. If they find there is an extra savings to go to Prince Rupert, they'll go there before Deltaport.

So all this planning on our infrastructure could very well be shortsighted, because the market's changing every day — which brings me back to the South Fraser perimeter road, the cut through my community and North Delta. That is not to say that there's no need for a South Fraser perimeter road if it's there to provide infrastructure to the Surrey docks. But if it's there to move infrastructure, to move traffic from Deltaport to the 401, that's a very, very different argument.

Gateway is more than a \$3 billion project. A few days ago — coincidentally, right after the throne speech — in the *Vancouver Sun* it was reported that they're now going to twin the George Massey Tunnel, which will be an engineering feat, with all its little setbacks. It's going to happen. I've talked to engineers. It's not that easy to put another tube by the tunnel. But let's beat the drum again.

The most interesting was the admission of the Surrey connection to Gateway — by the executive director Mike Proudfoot — a four-lane connector expressway between Highway 99 and 401. In fact, it's the old concept, the old Highway 10 truck route that seems to have been abandoned over the years. O and D studies — origin and destination studies — show there is a need to connect traffic between Deltaport and the 401 — there's no question there — for goods and movement. So we have a new road now being proposed to do that exact thing — to connect the Deltaport to the 401 vis-à-vis this new connection that was announced last week.

So the question is \$800 million for the South Fraser perimeter road to move goods from Deltaport to the 401.... Meanwhile the government's already found a new route. I don't know. It defies logic. When it comes down to the long-term plan of where we're heading, I don't think the government really knows. The South Fraser perimeter road may be necessary for movements — and I'm not against the South Fraser perimeter road — to and from industrial parks along the river — Tilbury Industrial Park, Annacis Island, Surrey docks, the tannery, the Port Mann. But should it be designed for international truck traffic and movement when the ministry is already proposing a four-lane connector to Highway 1 from south Surrey to north Langley?

I want a record. The member for Delta South will concur that there is something called a Hoover-Nass proposal, which looks at a southern route that will connect with this other proposal that's been made. The cost savings alone, in my estimation, by ramping down the South Fraser perimeter road along my neighbourhood, could be in the order of close to \$100 million.

For the people of North Delta and the residents of Sunbury, Annieville and Gunderson, it's time to maybe look at a two-lane route only along that corridor with very little impacts to the environment — maybe a two-lane route that serves trucks and commercial traffic only. The other traffic could be very much diverted on the Nordel, where they should go, and save a neighbourhood of 2,000 to 3,000 people who are going to be severely impacted. We have to be creative, and to suddenly have.... With all due respect to the engineer, we've got to think outside the box, and I hope we'll be able to do that in the next couple of months.

[1140]

V. Roddick: It is an incredible honour and a privilege to have run successfully in a by-election and two provincial elections for the constituency of Delta South, one of the major gateways not only to our province but to Canada and beyond.

Delta South still manages to be a community in the true sense of the word. We started as a coastal village and thriving commercial centre with its own train station at Port Guichon, government docks, fishing and farming industries, police, telegraph services and substantial canneries up and down the Ladner area of the Fraser River.

Ladner was a precursor of today's multicultural and multi-ethnic society. The small village boasted an aboriginal population as well as Caucasian, Chinese and Japanese, all employed at the cannery, in boat-building and repairs, in fishing and farming, as well as in sundry other entrepreneurial business ventures.

Descendants of these pioneering families continue to thrive in Delta South today. They and hardy newcomers are staunchly committed to maintaining and enhancing our forefathers' vision in a beautiful — actually, a spectacular — place to live.

I have pounded the podium on several basic issues over the past six years. Many of these issues will now need decisions taken during this term in office. Health care in our community now includes our unique local liaison group, Delta Healthcare Association, which keeps the Fraser Health Authority abreast of our community issues and allows us to discuss what fundamental changes we must make to improve our health and to protect our precious public health care system for the long term.

Tsawwassen First Nation. We have an agreement-in-principle, and we are in treaty mode. It is anticipated that this will be the first urban treaty signed. B.C. is determined to lead Canada and walk the path together to lasting reconciliation.

Roberts Bank port expansion. This redevelopment by the Vancouver Port Authority will have an even bigger impact on Delta — in particular, Delta South — than the first two put together. I feel strongly that despite the attempts of the Vancouver Port Authority and the federal and provincial environment ministries to hold unbiased, open information forums, this method of communications has not been overly successful. VPA — along with municipal, provincial and federal partners — needs to reinstate the original Deltaport liaison committee to assist in addressing local concerns.

B.C. and Delta South are right in the middle of Canada's access to Asia. Let's work together, because we want sustainable, vibrant, creative communities that live in balance with all that it has been blessed with by nature.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

The agricultural bylaws, the positive changes in the Ministry of Agriculture — such as the reinstatement of the Agricultural Land Commission within the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands and the establishment of a parliamentary secretary for agricultural planning: these bode well for the establishment of workable urban agriculture solutions in Delta South as well as province-wide.

[1145]

On February 17, "Planning for Our Future — Growing B.C. Agriculture" was launched at the Pacific Agri-

culture Show in Abbotsford. The agricultural plan will go a long way to ensure that B.C. leads the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness, leads the world in sustainable environmental management with the best air and water quality and the best fisheries management and the creation of more jobs per capita than anywhere else in Canada. Get involved, everyone. Agriculture is the key. We still have to eat to live.

Traffic infrastructure. The member opposite from Delta North was concerned about the 72nd-Highway 91 border infrastructure that has been announced by this government. The point of going down 72nd, joining Highway 91 and going south has already been brought up in the House and to the Gateway — that this is not an acceptable solution and to please look at the design of this. It is imperative that we have good border infrastructure.

The GVRD TransLink meeting that was held the other weekend.... Again, abundantly clear to those involved — the Gateway — that agriculture and the tunnel plus the bog must be looked at extremely carefully. It is very sensitive. It doesn't matter what route is taken in the Gateway; agriculture will be affected more than anything else.

I really feel strongly, especially after having been in this position for five years in government — six years now, actually; how time flies when you're having fun — that negative, defeatist attitudes really get you nowhere. You need to have a positive outlook. You need to be able to discuss things with people and get your point across, and we can do that with our traffic. We can do that with our area. Good heavens. We are discussing that with Gateway. My gosh, the NDP wanted to put a theme park in the bog. I venture to suggest that if we sat down and stopped saying that decisions have been made, work with Gateway, we can get our point across.

It is imperative, actually, that the Gateway program not only listens but, most importantly, hears our communities' concerns. The general public is trying its level best to be heard and understood. We are hard-working citizens who pay taxes so that publicly funded entities can hold hearings and make decisions that affect all our lives. Our message must be heard. As taxpayers and citizens, we deserve no less.

Delta South is a community with so many challenges and so much potential. We have it all: Burns Bog, Boundary Bay, unique urban spaces, a historical village, agriculture, marine and industrial areas. We have much to protect and share with the rest of B.C.

Delta South is also a community faced with a number of multi-jurisdictional and contentious issues. In my acceptance speech last spring I said that I looked forward to the opportunity for the B.C. Liberal government and the municipality of Delta to forge a new relationship that could address local concerns in a positive, constructive manner that would benefit everyone. This relationship would also need to include input from the two Delta MPs, both Delta MLAs, mayor and council and Tsawwassen first nations. To represent

Delta effectively, we need to forge strong partnerships with all stakeholders.

[1150]

Perhaps it's time for a first-rate mediator to be engaged to bring all sides together to create a workable formula for successful resolutions to Delta's concerns. Another option might be the development of a response team from each provincial ministry responsible for each local issue, i.e., transportation, agriculture by-laws, power lines, etc. We could possibly organize workshops between appropriate senior ministry officials and the Delta mayor and council. We also need input from the federal government regarding the port expansion, access to Asia-Pacific and treaty negotiations. Mayor Jackson is now chair of the GVRD. This might facilitate another avenue of approach.

The issues and concerns facing Delta South should receive no less recognition, attention, investment by the province than those of the BCMA, BCNU, HEU, BCTF, provincial prosecutors, etc. Delta South constituents are taxpayers who deserve to be treated with the same consideration that these groups are. They pay the salaries of all of us and of all of those involved in the issues in Delta.

Delta South may be a gateway to B.C. and Canada, but it shouldn't become a provincial and federal doormat or dumping ground. We have increased truck traffic from the port and the ferry terminal running through Delta's residential and farming areas, with more to come. Yet the initial transportation plan from the Gateway program didn't even include the Massey Tunnel and Highway 17 in its vision for the future. Our input — our positive, hard-working input — changed that omission. Let's develop a plan for the people who live in Delta South, not simply for those who drive through it.

Delta has many community groups who have demonstrated their willingness and commitment to find positive solutions for local issues: Save Delta Hospital, Delta Farmers' Institute, Delta Healthcare Association, TRAHVOL. They have all stepped up to the plate. Now it's time that all levels of government respond in a like manner. We need a plan for the future and to develop a big-picture approach for problem-solving.

The Speech from the Throne on February 14, 2006, Valentine's Day, allows us to do just that. Transformative change was the key to British Columbia's progress in the last four and a half years. It is the legacy of conscious, measured decisions to improve health care, education, child care, employment and assistance, environmental stewardship and collaborative new relationships with governments at every level. We can and will harness the power of new knowledge and creativity to ensure that we are ready for a rapidly changing world.

To maintain and improve our quality of life, we must rethink assumptions of the last century. We simply must ask questions of all British Columbians. What fundamental changes are to be made over the long term to attain sustainability in the programs and services that government provides? That is what democracy is all about. We are right to demand reform and improvements, and B.C. is leading the way.

[1155]

The throne speech has one main purpose in mind: to help all British Columbians make the most of their potential by being supported by loving families, friends and safe communities. We are not afraid to look for solutions beyond our borders, be they municipal, provincial or national. As I said at the outset, the strength of our province has always been the strength of its people — as leaders, builders, innovators, risk-takers and pioneers of opportunity. Mr. Speaker, we truly are embarking on a decade of pure gold.

Noting the time, I move adjournment of the debate.

V. Roddick moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Richmond moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

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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.

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