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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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

SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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MONDAY, APRIL 3, 2006

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

Prayers.

Orders of the Day

Hon. C. Richmond: I call private members' statements.

Private Members' Statements

RESTORING B.C.'S LEADERSHIP ON TOBACCO CONTROL

D. Cubberley: I'm pleased today to speak to the issue of tobacco control and the need and opportunity for a comprehensive strategy to reduce the incidence of smoking. It's an issue I feel strongly about as a result of my family's history with tobacco and my own experience with the challenge of quitting.

Tobacco is a substance that sets roots deep in our cravings, and it invades our daily life. It's a vehicle for delivering nicotine, a highly addictive drug, to smokers, whose body chemistry comes to demand reinforcing doses on a frequent schedule. As a drug, nicotine is as addictive as heroin, yet it remains a commercial product — widely available, broadly promoted and entirely licit to use.

[1005]

Cigarettes are a trap waiting to be sprung, marketed in the guise of a desirable lifestyle choice, as if without consequences. The young are especially vulnerable, their instincts about danger being dulled by a social posture that makes it cool to dispute received wisdom and sometimes common sense.

Tobacco is insidious. It is the only product that's absolutely lethal when used exactly in the way its manufacturers intend — that is, as a daily habit started young and continuing for a lifetime. Despite the fact that today only about 14 percent of British Columbians smoke tobacco, it remains a scourge, killing some 5,600 people a year at a price of over \$1.25 billion. Fourteen percent overall masks the fact that among people aged 20 to 24, the rate of smoking is 22 percent.

The habits of parents directly influence those of their children. I know this from personal experience, having had two smoking parents and having started myself by the age of 14. Today smoking is a lot less glamorous than when I first lit up, but the dynamics of endorsement continue to enable people to start, especially while young. Smoking rates have come down, but smoking remains the single most preventable cause of illness, disability and death in Canada.

Each year thousands of young people flirt with smoking without a clear picture of its implications and wind up hooked. This happens largely because we allow a highly addictive substance to be openly marketed and readily accessible to young people. While much can be done to help smokers quit, much more is needed to ensure that they never start. That means

ending smoking's promotion as an accepted part of everyday life, and that means taking a more comprehensive approach to control.

A more comprehensive approach involves reducing use by further restricting supply, raising costs, controlling how it is advertised and where it's promoted and presented, and affecting its image in at-risk populations by linking it to consequences. B.C. has the goal of achieving the healthiest and fittest population in Canada. ActNow has a goal of reducing the incidence of smoking by 10 percent by 2010. Organizations comprising the B.C. Healthy Living Alliance are calling for more determined action to reach a target smoking rate of 10 percent by 2010. This goal is attainable if there's the political will in this House to act now.

But even the much more modest 10-percent reduction is unattainable if B.C. continues to coast on its laurels. Today the only sustained initiative involves strategies that help addicted smokers quit. Smoking cessation is certainly an important instrument in the tobacco control tool kit, but it doesn't address the social causes of smoking. An ounce of prevention is indeed worth a pound of cure. Quitting smoking isn't easy to do. I can attest from direct experience that it's better never to start — far better.

During the '90s B.C. led on tobacco controls. Today we have a vision but are without a strategy to get us there. Tobacco control is, or should and can be, a non-partisan issue — something we can embrace beyond party and work cooperatively to bring about. It's the single most important public health intervention available. It's time for us to collectively renew our commitment to leadership, because smoking causes 30 percent of all cancer deaths today, and it's entirely preventable. Decisive action now will serve to bring those numbers down, and I appeal today for renewed leadership that will translate that goal into meaningful steps.

Last week I introduced a private member's bill that would ban the sale of smokes in pharmacies. The public response has been supportive — not least among professional pharmacists, who endorse this by over 70 percent. This step, while modest, is symbolically important, because pharmacies are integral to our public health care system. Pharmacists want to dispense cure, not promote addiction. It's important practically, too, because the pharmacy stores are highly visible points-of-sale for tobacco. Reducing points-of-sale makes tobacco less convenient to obtain and less an accepted feature of everyday life.

I hope that government will come to view this proposal favourably, endorse it and move quickly to implement it — treating it, if you will, as a first step in renewed leadership and a comprehensive approach in a bipartisan spirit. We on this side would welcome that.

Progress in tobacco control and smoking reduction involves measures that denormalize tobacco and smoking. That word may sound ungainly, but it captures the direction of change required to move an addictive substance away from social acceptance towards high-risk, health-endangering status.

[1010]

Making tobacco less normal and more abnormal is a key objective. Broadly speaking, it involves making cigarettes less convenient to obtain, less affordable to buy, less attractive to smoke, less acceptable socially as a habit, less pleasant to indulge in and less benign as a consumer choice.

While these factors affect the choice to smoke at every age, they're especially important for kids, because if people don't begin while young, they're unlikely to begin at all. The fact is that the young are susceptible, and they're targeted by advertising techniques that are as insidious as they are effective. The young are also most affected by peer choices and least prone to linking choice to consequence. They tend to believe that consequences happen to other people — that if they're not invincible, they're at least immune. Tobacco control strategies have to work on multiple tracks in order to reach the young.

Do I have time remaining?

Mr. Speaker: Member, you're right on time.

R. Hawes: Thank you to the member for bringing this topic.

I am a smoker. I decided in 1991 to take a respite from smoking. I haven't touched tobacco in 15 years, but I'm still a smoker. I have absolutely no doubt that if I were to smoke a cigarette today, I would be buying a pack of cigarettes tomorrow.

I appreciate how addictive it is. It is so addictive that I can tell you it's one of the hardest things there is to stop. I've managed to avoid the temptation for 15 years, although from time to time the temptation arises and you have to fight that off.

I'm drawn very much to the persuasive argument made by the member, but at the same time I know that the B.C. Pharmacy Association and the Canadian Association of Chain Drugstores do not support this position. I've thought a lot about both sides of the issue. Should tobacco be banned from pharmacies, or should it not be? It's not as simple as just saying: "Let's just take it out and reduce points-of-sale."

There are very strong arguments, while we are fighting the tobacco use in our population, for allowing pharmacies to continue to sell tobacco. That's the place that you buy cessation products. I can tell you that when you go down to the local corner store to buy your cigarettes, which smokers would do, there isn't any move there. There are no cessation products. Nobody there is going to offer advice that you should stop. The only place you're going to get that is from your pharmacist.

I'm not so convinced that taking tobacco out of the drugstore is, today, the right solution. Maybe the right solution is to work towards taking tobacco out of all stores, because nobody wants to use it anymore. That's where the education part comes in.

I'm thinking that pharmacies today aren't like they used to be 30 years ago when it was the little friendly pharmacist that everybody knew. Today these are big, big stores — a lot of them — and they're selling motor

oil and cans of tuna and bread and clothing. They have a mix of everything. The pharmacy is over in the corner of the store, and it comprises a very small part of the store.

If you, say, take tobacco out of the pharmacy, and it's dictated by the government, then what happens is that, particularly, the bigger chain stores that have big pharmacies open a kiosk somewhere on their property from which they sell tobacco. But the sale of tobacco continues. What happens is that the people who are buying tobacco — and as we acknowledge between us quite freely, it is so addictive — are going to continue going there. They're not going to get exposed to the kind of advice that they want.

I believe that what we should be doing is drawing our pharmacists far more into the consultative vein in health care, and I know the ministry is looking at that. I know the government is considering how to better utilize pharmacists. I think that pharmacists could be used, for example, to do spirometry testing in drugstores and to invite smokers to take a spirometry test to see if they're susceptible to COPD or one of the lung diseases that's associated with smoking. Those can be detected through a simple spirometry test that could be administered by a pharmacist.

[1015]

I think pharmacists have a big role to play as consultants and as cessation specialists, but to get to the pharmacist, the smoker has to go there. And what attracts a smoker more than the sale of tobacco?

I don't think the argument is quite as simple as let's just take it out of pharmacies. I think there's an argument on both sides. I would prefer us to have a wholesome discussion about an overall strategy that encompasses both points-of-sale.... For example, we've just passed a piece of legislation here, Tobacco Sales (Preventing Youth Access to Tobacco) Amendment Act, 2006, making it much, much tougher on those who would sell tobacco to kids who are under-age. That kind of legislation is very important in moving ahead to our target of a 10-percent reduction.

We continue to lead Canada. We have the lowest rate of smoking in this country, so there are some things here that are going right. Rather than rushing headlong and rapidly into something like telling drugstores to get tobacco out, I think it's better that both sides of the House, in a bipartisan or non-partisan-type approach, talk about what the benefits are both ways and then arrive at a decision that we move forward with.

Thank you, again, to the member and to you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing the time to speak.

D. Cubberley: To respond to some of the things the member said about smokes in pharmacies and stopping the sale. One of the things to bear in mind is that B.C.'s not leading the way on this. We're the laggards. We are one of only three jurisdictions in Canada that still tolerates the sale of smokes from pharmacies and stores containing pharmacies.

The other thing is that the idea that there's a big debate within the group comprising pharmacists is not

correct. Pharmacists are unilateral. They're over 70 percent of one mind in saying: "Get the smokes out of pharmacies." They don't want people to walk past a power-wall of tobacco on their way with trying to resolve themselves to take a smoking cessation product off their shelf.... They don't want tobacco in the same venue that they are vending cure from, because it promotes addiction. The visibility of tobacco is a key ingredient in keeping people smoking. It reminds you of your craving. We've been down that path, those of us who've smoked, and we know what it does.

Of pharmacists, 70 percent — those are members of the College of Pharmacists — support getting it out. Of those pharmacists who own pharmacies, who are themselves business people, 60 percent already have it out. The only chain store which is owned by individual pharmacists has it out. The people who don't want it out are the chain drugstores.

Let's not confuse the issue here. The pharmacists know what they want, and the chain drugstore owners know what they want. What we need to do is make a choice between those two, and we need to move down this path.

This is only one of a number of building blocks that we need as part of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy. We need to move back to an aggressive media campaign that helps us to denormalize tobacco smoking, especially in at-risk and hard-to-reach populations. I can think of two that jump to mind.

One of the first, which has the highest smoking rate in British Columbia, is B.C.'s first nations. The tobacco strategy that we have currently, while it works very well for many of us, cannot work for that population. It has to have a dedicated strategy. The other group is young girls and women. They are taking up smoking in greater numbers than young boys. It's imperative that we have a strategy that reaches those people.

In order to do that, we need the money to fund it. We collect \$700 million a year in tobacco taxes, and we spend less than 1 percent. The Center for Disease Control in the United States recommends \$6 per person as the level that would effectively bring smoking down. In British Columbia \$6 per person could be easily funded, simply by raising our taxes to the current level in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and ensuring that we tax roll-your-own cigarettes. The money is there for us to translate our vision of a smoke-free British Columbia into a reality.

HOPE FOR A CURE

S. Hawkins: April is Cancer Awareness Month, and I really can't think of any other disease that has personally touched more people. We don't know why some people get cancer and others don't, but we sure know what can cause some kinds of cancer and what we can do to prevent or reduce our risk of getting it.

[1020]

We have this valuable, potentially life-saving information because of research and the hope for a cure. Today, in this month dedicated to cancer awareness, I

would like to pay special tribute and recognize all the people and all the courageous patients involved in cancer research. They are a huge part of our hope for the cure.

I am a living example of the value of research. You know, sometimes they say a little knowledge is dangerous, and do I ever know that to be true, because when I was given my diagnosis of acute myeloid leukemia two years ago, I immediately thought I had been handed a death sentence. You see, 25 years ago when I was still working as a cancer nurse — and I guess I'm aging myself again — there was very little back then that could be done for someone with my kind of cancer. So I can't tell you how relieved I was when I was told by my medical team that because of excellent research over the years, there was hope for a cure for me by way of a bone marrow transplant. I am very, very grateful for how far we've come since my days of caring for patients with my kind of cancer.

I was on a plane a few months ago, and I was sitting beside this gentleman. We got to talking about our families, and I told him my story and how my sister saved my life. While I was telling him that, I could see that he was kind of crying. He did tell me through tears that he was very happy for me and that he had been a bone marrow donor for his brother some 20 years ago. All through the years, he thought that he had let his brother down, because his brother did die. He didn't survive the transplant. I told him that I didn't think so at all. I thanked him for stepping forward to help his brother. I told him how much I appreciated what he had done for his brother, because all of us that came after him benefited from them — both of them — participating in groundbreaking, life-saving research over 20 years ago.

I am very proud to be in a province where we have a B.C. Cancer Agency that dedicates its expertise to making life better for patients living with cancer. In 70 years we've gone from worst to best, and examples of how cancer outcomes have improved from worst to best in Canada since our Cancer Agency in 1935 are as follows: 70 years ago most people who had cancer died of it; today approximately 50 percent of cancer patients are cured. Childhood leukemia was universally fatal 70 years ago; today more than 80 percent of children are cured. Testicular cancer, rarely cured 70 years ago, now has a greater than 90-percent cure rate. The median survival time for Hodgkins lymphoma was three years back in 1935. The cure rate today is over 80 percent.

The Pap smear, the most effective cancer-screening test ever invented, was introduced in the 1950s in British Columbia as the world's first population-based cancer screening program, thanks to the groundbreaking work of B.C. Cancer Agency head and pioneering oncologist Dr. David Boyes. Cervical screening has since been adopted worldwide and has reduced the incidence in mortality of cervical cancer by over 70 percent.

The B.C. Cancer Foundation committed \$24 million over five years to establish the B.C. Cancer Agency's Genome Sciences Centre, the only genomics lab in Canada dedicated to cancer research, where scientists

became the first in the world to complete the genome sequence of the SARS virus in 2003. Their scientific breakthrough has advanced cancer research worldwide.

The B.C. Cancer Agency's lymphoma research team has improved the control rate of the most common type of non-Hodgkins lymphomas by 50 percent, achieving the greatest progress in Canada. This cancer research team is known and respected worldwide for its innovative approach to cancer research and treatment.

Stem cells were reproduced in 2002. Researchers at the B.C. Cancer Agency's Terry Fox lab reproduced stem cells of the blood-forming system of adult mice, which could offer enormous benefits to cancer patients who need bone marrow transplants.

So much done in 70 years — such little time — because people cared to dedicate their lives to research, to offer themselves up as patients, and for families, who saw the benefits and helped fundraise.

There are 11 world-class research labs and units that comprise the B.C. Cancer Research Centre as part of the B.C. Cancer Agency, and they receive their basic funding and operating support from the B.C. Cancer Foundation, which I know many of my colleagues support. We've all gone to many fundraisers for these good causes.

[1025]

The 11 labs are advanced therapeutics; cancer control research; cancer endocrinology; cancer genetics and developmental biology; cancer imaging; B.C. Cancer Agency's Trev and Joyce Deeley Research Centre right here in Victoria; B.C. Cancer Agency's Michael Smith Genome Sciences Centre; medical biophysics; molecular oncology and breast cancer program; Terry Fox laboratory; and the tumour research repository, again, right here in B.C. — world-class labs.

I'm proud to live in a province with the best cancer outcomes in the country. I know this is a result of our scientists, health professionals, patients, families and donors who are dedicated to excellence in research — research which translates into best practices and improving outcomes for patients like myself.

L. Krog: I want to offer, firstly, my compliments to the member for Kelowna-Mission this morning for her statement on this very important issue that faces British Columbians day after day. She is quite right to thank the many dedicated researchers and the people of this province who have worked so very hard to find cures for cancer to treat those who suffer from it.

I will be a tiny bit partisan, however, in saying that we must also recognize that in the '90s the government did make putting funding into the treatment of cancer and cancer prevention a priority. That, of course, is the problem that our health care system faces on a daily basis: the needs of those who arrive at the hospital emergency door day in, day out, versus the need to try and treat the long-term causes of cancer and other diseases that are such a threat to all of us.

We know that the rate of cancer is increasing in our society. Mercifully, as the member has pointed out, the rate of cure is indeed getting higher. We are making greater and greater discoveries as a result of the hard work of so many day after day, but we live in a society where cancer will continue to be a scourge and will increase. In that, we must take some responsibility, individually and as a society, to try and do everything we can to prevent it. That includes doing the simple things every day — that is, eating better, exercising and taking account of the gene pool from which we all come, because there is no question there is a relationship there.

In my wife's family, her aunt died of leukemia, one of her aunt's children died of leukemia, and a second aunt died later of leukemia. It is clearly a scourge in my wife's family, so it is of particular interest to me that the member has brought this topic up this morning.

She talked about the generous donation of bone marrow from various people. One of the former members of this House, Jan Pullinger, made a similar donation to help her brother in the cure of his cancer. These are selfless acts. These are the things that bring out the best in all of us when a family is confronted with what is truly a crisis — not in the common sense of the way we use that term in politics every day whenever there is a problem, but a genuine crisis where it touches our family and our own hearts.

Over time — with our encouragement, with the support of government and with the support of society as a whole — we are going to find more and more cures and better and better methods of treatment. In paying tribute to the people this morning who undertake that, those who give their lives to it, we are indeed fortunate. They are our heroes. It is one thing to perform individual acts of heroism for which we all receive public notoriety, but many of those who work hard day in and day out to find a cure for cancer — who work in laboratories and research labs — go unsung, if you will, much like the people who are victims of cancer in our society who fight battles day in and day out and likewise go unsung, except perhaps for the small audience of their own family.

In closing today, I want to pay tribute to those in the background — those who don't get the notoriety, those who don't get the credit and those who don't get our thanks. They are heroes here today as well.

[1030]

S. Hawkins: I am in total agreement with the member opposite. I know that government can't do it all. That's why I, too, believe we each have a role to play, to take responsibility for our own health and to get involved to help find a cure.

In 1977, B.C.'s first cancer research centre was set up in temporary quarters in a McGavins Bakery building built in the 1920s. The B.C. Cancer Agency's landmark research centre in Vancouver opened in 2005. Built on half a city block donated to the B.C. Cancer Foundation and funded partly through donations to

the B.C. Cancer Foundation, the research centre is one of the largest research facilities in Canada.

For every research dollar the B.C. Cancer Agency receives from the B.C. Cancer Foundation, agency scientists and researchers can attract four more dollars through competitive grant support, increasing the agency's total research revenue four times over, from a base of \$10.8 million provided by the B.C. Cancer Foundation to \$45.5 million in 2005 — a 400-percent return on investment.

There are very distinguished cancer scientists drawn to the B.C. Cancer Agency and funded by the B.C. Cancer Foundation. Who can forget Dr. Michael Smith, the late Nobel award-winning geneticist and founding director of the B.C. Cancer Agency's newly created Genome Sciences Centre in 1999? And there's Dr. Victor Ling, who's internationally recognized for his groundbreaking work on cancer cell resistance to drugs. He is the current vice-president of discovery at the B.C. Cancer Agency.

Dr. Marco Marra, as I mentioned, is a scientist and head of the agency's Genome Sciences Centre — head of the team that broke the SARS virus. Dr. Brad Nelson is senior research scientist, immunologist, ovarian cancer researcher and director of the B.C. Cancer Agency's Deeley Research Centre in Victoria. All are amazing people. They're helping in the background, as the member opposite mentioned — unsung heroes.

When I think of how fortunate we are to live a good life, I also think we have an obligation to give back and make a positive difference in the lives of others. I'm reminded of the words of an eight-year-old child who helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for tsunami relief. He said, "You have not lived until you've done something for which no one can repay you" — such profound but true words from someone so young.

My friends and I made a commitment years ago to help raise funds for cancer research, and I have to say that today it feels like the most important thing I've ever done in my life. Today, in Cancer Awareness Month — this month — I say thank you to all those who support cancer research. Those who are involved in cancer research — to all of you I say simply: thank you. You have lived.

URBAN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

V. Roddick: Agriculture is recognized as a sector that is transforming B.C.'s economy. The agriculture plan was mentioned in the throne speech in the context of healthy living and getting more B.C. products into schools.

Our diversity is number one. It produces more than \$2.3 billion in farm cash receipts yearly and employs more than 280,000 people on farms, ranches and hatcheries, etc., with over 225 different commodities produced. B.C. has far more diversity in its agriculture production than any other province, and it generates more than \$22 billion in consumer sales each year.

A major challenge, and one of our priorities, is bridging the urban-agricultural divide. We need to

market the agricultural sector to the urban public so that they understand the history of agriculture in B.C. and the benefits of a thriving industry.

To renew knowledge and understanding of where food actually comes from, to educate the young people more about the roles of agriculture in the economy and the need to make sure they recognize the importance of food — this is essential. ActNow B.C. is a healthy-eating program aimed at ensuring a healthier population, especially among B.C.'s young people. The school fruit and vegetable snack program, a pilot project as part of the government's ActNow B.C., encourages children — in fact, all British Columbians — to eat healthy and eat B.C.-grown fruits and vegetables.

Healthy Dining, highlighting healthy food choices, opens up opportunities for smaller niche producers. Agrifood Partners in Healthy Eating increases consumer choice, with opportunities for market innovation for producers. Partnerships with B.C. Healthy Living Alliance and 2010 Legacies Now. Opportunities to explain the importance of the sector through 48 fairs and exhibitions in B.C., through farmers' markets, through 4-H education.

[1035]

When city folks visit a farmers' market, they get a chance to connect with the very people who grow their food. Now not only can they admire the fresh and appetizing products on display, but they can talk to the producer and learn about the opportunities and the problems that farmers face when they work to put food on our tables. We need more of that in a society where farmers are taken for granted and young people think that food magically appears on supermarket shelves. Milk, honestly, comes from a cow, not a carton.

Urban growth has meant that many residences are coming closer and closer to agricultural land, and this has led to an increase in complaints about modern agricultural practices. We want to help educate non-farmers — and, in some cases, farmers — so that they understand the efforts, skills and hard work that our farmers go through to put food on our urban dinner tables. Often, the understanding of urban dwellers about the problems and opportunities of our producers is limited. This has got to change.

Closing this divide can potentially increase sales. A public that is aware and educated of how and where food is produced is more likely to choose and support local producers.

While on the subject of education, I want to emphasize the importance of getting the message out that there are tremendous opportunities in agriculture. Many people in the industry today are concerned about what's going to happen to the industry when they retire. They're concerned that there aren't enough young people interested in making this commitment to this unique yet vitally important way of life. We need to turn that around so that people have a sense of accomplishment for today as well as the confidence that the legacy they've built will survive and prosper for generations to come.

Government intends to deliver effective services to help industry become more profitable. This will ensure that more young people will be attracted to agriculture. While 4-H has done a magnificent job in promoting agriculture as a potential career, we have to take the next step to ensure that the young people who went through 4-H actually have the confidence to choose agriculture as a career. To do that, we need to build a sustainable agriculture industry that will be profitable, not only next year but ten, 20 years down the road — forever.

In order to achieve that type of long-term success, we plan to develop a strategic long-term direction for the industry. An agriculture plan is a major priority of our Premier, Minister Pat Bell and our entire government. The new provincial ag plan will look to inspire public interest in and excitement for this industry. Truly, I believe there are huge opportunities in this area. We will be building a positive relationship between farmers and non-farmers. One of the main goals is to significantly increase awareness, understanding and support of the food production system among the B.C. public.

The future remains bright for British Columbia. Agriculture is a stabilizing force for the provincial economy, but a huge opportunity also exists in the 2010 Olympics, as B.C. producers will have the opportunity to show off their world-class products.

We need to re-establish the link between agriculture and society as a whole. There is no one in this province — or on the planet, for that matter — who does not have ties to agriculture. If you eat, you are a stakeholder. I look forward to comments from my colleague.

[1040]

B. Ralston: The Canadian Federation of Agriculture speaks of Food Freedom Day, which is the day on which the average Canadian consumer has earned enough to pay for their food for the entire year. This year it was February 8, 2006. We in Canada and in British Columbia are particularly blessed with sources of inexpensive and safe food. Perhaps that goes largely unappreciated by urban dwellers. I agree with the member for Delta South that a secure food supply is becoming increasingly important as we look out into the future. Indeed, a domestically grown food supply becomes increasingly important as well.

The president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture has said that a homegrown food supply is a cornerstone of sovereignty. In the future we cannot continue to rely forever upon imported food sources. Many urban dwellers, perhaps, aren't fully cognizant of that, but I think the issue of food security and sources of food is increasingly becoming an issue to the vast majority of the population who live in urban and suburban settings.

There are some problems in the supply of food. Not everyone has access to good, cheap, quality food. Many of our citizens are forced to rely upon food banks for some of their sources of food. B.C.'s nutritionists have spoken of.... While the Premier has set out some goals

about good nutrition for people, the average income of some people doesn't permit them to enjoy a healthy diet. So there is much to be done in that particular area.

Perhaps one of the most successful programs in the Ministry of Agriculture was the Buy B.C. program. A few years ago in core review it was downsized and handed off to the B.C. Agriculture Council, where many producers, both primary and secondary, are reluctant to spend the licensing fees in order to promote their particular products.

The direction that has been taken to add food to the roster of the policies to be implemented by the Ministry of Health, particularly the ActNow B.C. program, is an important first step. I know that's just being undertaken.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

When one considers, for example — as the members here have discussed in recent weeks — that a major purchaser of thermalized food from Ontario is the B.C. health care system, when the opportunity to buy nutritious, healthy, British Columbia-grown food is available here, one would think that the government might want to consider making B.C.-produced food a priority as an important source of nutrition for those in hospitals and other long-term care facilities. It would support our agricultural sector and supply a better source of food than some of the food that's being supplied now.

The right-to-farm legislation is another important step in recognizing and protecting farm practices against suburban encroachment. Pressure in the suburbs — particularly in the southern Okanagan, the lower part of Vancouver Island and in the Fraser Valley — is increasing. That particular legislation, freeing farmers from the worry of the nuisance of lawsuits and establishing an appeal mechanism to regulate disputes between neighbours about ongoing farm practices, is a good thing and an important step. I think it secures the future for farming.

Agriculture is an important part of the economy. We look forward on this side of the House to participating in the development of the agricultural plan, although regrettably — I have to be a tiny bit partisan here, as the previous speaker was as well — that opposition MLAs will not be part of the committee. But we will definitely be making our presence felt at the public meetings that are required as part of this.

I look forward to celebrating and meeting with the various representatives of the producer groups who are here today and to seeing agriculture grow and prosper as an important part of the B.C. economy, both for those who work on the land and those who consume the products and nutritious food that we all look forward to each year.

[1045]

V. Roddick: I thank the Agriculture critic for his thoughtful comments. We will all work together to Buy B.C., because B.C. is best.

There are members of our communities that are taking to heart the importance of food education and making sure that people have the knowledge to make informed choices about the food they eat. Gerald Worobetz — and I've mentioned him before — is a chef teacher at South Delta Secondary and a strong advocate of buying local B.C. products. He also shows his students the farms that grow our food, which helps forge that important connection in their young minds between the source of food and their dinner plates.

John Bishop, of the restaurant Bishop's on 4th in Vancouver, is another one of those exceptional people. He has joined with Gary King of Hazelmere Organic Farms to tour the province filming and writing about year-round local B.C. produce. It's all too easy to forget the people and the processes of the agriculture industry. Consequently, I will continue to stress the importance of remembering the source of our food.

Today is B.C. Agriculture Day. I hope everyone takes the chance to take part and celebrate B.C.'s best. Agriculture is our only sustainable natural resource. Remember, you still have to eat to live.

BAISAKHI

H. Lali: Baisakhi is to Indians, particularly to Sikhs, what Christmas is to Christians, what Hanukkah is to Jews and what Eid is to Muslims. Baisakhi is celebrated on the first day of the month of Baisakh in the Indian lunar-based Vikrami calendar. Although the first of Baisakh does not usually fall on the same day, it is celebrated worldwide, including in Canada, by Indians on the 13th of April. Baisakhi is also pronounced "Vaisakhi."

Baisakhi, a national holiday in India, is celebrated by Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs, and has cultural, historical and religious significance. Baisakhi is culturally significant because it is the end of the winter harvest in north India and signals prosperity. Farmers are able to pay off their debts and pay for their children's education, weddings, etc. Folks celebrate their good fortune in festivals in every major community. Song, good food, wine and dance are the order of the day, and everyone gets together in their communities to celebrate the fruits of their labour over the past year.

The traditional north Indian, specifically Punjabi, dance is called bhangra. Young and old get together in a circle and dance to the beat of a dhol, an Indian drum, by kicking up their heels and throwing their arms to the gods in the skies. Men and women of the village trade friendly jabs and jokes in the spirit of the occasion as they dance and sing to their heart's delight. The Punjabi bhangra dance music is winning world acclaim due to its melodious dhol beat. Any person will automatically want to dance upon hearing a bhangra tune.

Historically, on the first of Baisakh 1699, the tenth Sikh prophet, Guru Gobind Singh, transformed the Sikh community from a small pacifist sect into a large militant fraternity. The fraternity known as the Khalsa, or brotherhood of the pure way, became an army of

warriors whose goal became the defence of the weak and downtrodden against the rich and powerful, and also the total destruction of the Mughal imperial rulers of India. From 1699 onwards, Sikhs took up arms en masse and by 1712 had set up their own country under Sikh rule in Punjab.

Within another 35 years the Sikhs reorganized under the name Dal Khalsa, or army of the Khalsa, and dealt a death blow to the Mughal empire by 1765 and freed all of north India from foreign rule. The rise of the Sikhs in Punjab inspired Hindus and Muslims alike in other parts of India, especially the Marathas under Shivaji in Maharashtra province, to take up arms and overthrow the Mughal occupiers of their homeland.

On the religious front, Baisakhi Day, also known as Khalsa Day, has the most significance for Sikhs. It is celebrated as a religious holiday by way of parades; *langar*, or free community kitchens; and Akhand Paths, three-day non-stop readings of the Sikh scriptures held in *gurdwaras*, or Sikh temples, in every Sikh community in the world, including Canada.

[1050]

In 1699, Gobind Singh transformed Sikhism into a militant fraternity dedicated to the path of righteousness and good to prevail over tyranny and evil. The tenth guru asked five Sikhs to sacrifice their lives for the faith. Whereas the gathering of almost 100,000 people in Anandpur City that day thought the guru had killed the five devotees, lo and behold, Gobind Singh led them from his tent, bloodied sword in hand, only to present them alive and well. They were dressed in bright yellow and blue uniforms looking like an army unit.

Gobind Singh administered a new kind of *amrit*, or baptism. Instead of teaching them only humility, he wanted the Sikhs to be fearless in opposing tyranny. He gave the five Sikhs baptismal water from a steel cauldron that he mixed with sugar, representing humility, and stirred with a dagger for bravery. Gobind Singh made them wear Panj Kakkaar, or Five Ks: *kes*, unshorn hair; *kanga*, a comb to symbolize cleanliness; *kara*, a steel bangle representing righteousness and also to protect the sword-wielding hand; *kachiri*, military breeches for moral restraint; *kirpan*, a sword to protect humankind and for self-defence.

He called the five Sikhs who were all from different castes the Panj Payaare, or the five beloveds. He gave all of them the last name "Singh," which means lion, and said that Sikh women should take the last name "Kaur," which means princess. At that time only the Hindu Rajput aristocracy took the monikers Singh and Kaur. By giving Sikhs the last name Singh and Kaur, Gobind Singh elevated their status and wanted them to be proud of who they were.

The tenth guru wanted the Sikhs to get rid of the caste system and create a society based on equality, fraternity and self-respect. He said, "*Manas ki jaat ek hi pehchaanbo*," which means: "Recognize the human race as one." Gobind Singh taught the Sikhs that in order to overthrow the tyrannical and bigoted Mughal rulers and to create an equal and just society, the Sikhs first

had to get rid of evil within themselves and within their own community. Gobind Singh stated: "Speaking truth is high, but higher still is truthful living."

D. Hayer: I consider it an honour to respond to the statement of the hon. member opposite. The festival of Vaisakhi is one of the most important in the Indian calendar. As a Sikh, like the member and others opposite, its celebration is very important to my heritage and to the tens of thousands of British Columbians of Indian heritage. But I want this House to know that the importance of Vaisakhi is recognized not just by people of Indian descent.

Across this province many thousands of non-Indo-Canadians join with us in this celebration. Vaisakhi is celebrated throughout the world. Our Premier many years ago was instrumental in assisting the Indian community in beginning the first Vaisakhi parade in Vancouver. When our Premier was mayor of Vancouver, he led the way for the Indo-Canadian community to develop the Punjabi market and to place signs in the Punjabi language throughout the Punjabi market area — the first in Canada. He has continued the support for the Indo-Canadian community over the years to the wide-ranging assistance and recognitions we see today in the Asia-Pacific initiative, in the Punjabi language lessons we have in schools today, in the help we are providing to assist new residents to take advantage of our vibrant economy.

In addition, this government is going to great lengths to encourage and accelerate the accreditation process for foreign-trained professionals to get them into the workplace quicker and into the roles appropriate for their skills and training. Also under our Premier's leadership, B.C. was the only province in Canada to celebrate and pass the proclamation recognizing the 400 years of the Guru Granth Sahib in the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Just a few days ago this House also unanimously supported the recognition of Khalsa and the five sacred symbols of the Sikh faith and the contribution that Canadian Sikhs have made to our country and our province.

[1055]

Vaisakhi is a celebration not just of Sikhs but of all Indians. This year the Vaisakhi parade will be celebrated on April 15 by more than 100,000 people in Vancouver and Surrey and other parts of British Columbia. This festival represents the ripening of harvest and the Indian new year and the birth of Khalsa. Vaisakhi is also observed as the Naba Barsha, new year in Bengal. In Himachal Pradesh the Vaisakhi festival is celebrated twice a year in honour of the goddess Jwalamukhi. In the southern part of India, Vaisakhi is celebrated to mark the Tamil and Telugu new year.

As well, this festival brings together British Columbians of all faiths and ethnicities. It is a celebration that is enjoyed throughout our multicultural province and allows everyone to sample the flavours, sounds and sights of our great diversity.

Vaisakhi is celebrated with parades, by partying and by wearing colourful traditional Indian clothes.

There will also be many examples of wonderful bhangra and giddha dances along with lots of singing.

The parade is always led by the float honouring our Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Following this acknowledgment of the spirituality of our deep faith are many other floats and groups of people celebrating this great day in our culture. All along the parade route in Vancouver and Surrey there will be little stalls offering free food and soft drinks, giving everyone the opportunity to taste some of the wonderful dishes and sweets of India.

This will be an outstanding occasion for people of all faiths and backgrounds to better get to know and understand our ethnic diversity that makes British Columbia so outstanding.

I encourage everyone, including all members of this House who are back in their constituencies next week, to join us on April 15 to celebrate Vaisakhi, the contributions of the Indo-Canadian community to our province and also the remarkable diversity we enjoy in British Columbia.

Also, I want to thank the Premier this time, who has encouraged all the MLAs to attend the Vaisakhi parades ever since I have known him.

S. Hammell: I'm pleased to join the members for Yale-Lillooet and Surrey-Tynehead to speak in this House about the festival of Vaisakhi.

I am looking forward to joining the members of my community — Sikh and others — as we together walk in the parade and celebrate the festival of Vaisakhi but also celebrate, as the member opposite has already said, the wonders of our multicultural community. As speakers have said to me before so eloquently, this festival is as important to the Sikh community as are the major events that are celebrated by other religions. This most important celebration, Vaisakhi, coincidentally always falls close to — many would say — the most important Christian celebration: the celebration of Easter.

Sikhism and Christianity share more than just significant dates. The belief in one God is common to both religions, as well as the need of good to triumph over evil and that as humans we are constantly in that struggle internally as well as externally. These beliefs are widespread throughout many of the religions of the world and address the need to speak of the human condition.

Easter also celebrates a new beginning, as does Vaisakhi, with the birth of the Khalsa and the giving of the Five Ks, representing *kes*, *kanga*, *kara*, *kachiri* and *kirpan* — the Five Ks being the symbols of faith of Sikhism and the external representation of the individual's commitment to that faith.

The values of building an egalitarian society, of building strong families and working hard are the fundamentals of the Sikh community I know. They are values we can all emulate. For numerous years I have walked in the Vaisakhi parade and experienced the joy and camaraderie of the Mela, as well as times the thrust and press of an unbelievably dense crowd. Some participants choose to walk in that parade, in the crowd, and others to set up in an area where they can feed the passing parade. There is a joy and generosity of spirit

that encompasses everyone who participates in the festival of Vaisakhi, and everyone is welcome and welcomed. It is a place where old acquaintances are renewed and new friends are made.

I encourage you, as all of us have in this House, to join in that parade and to encourage all those in our communities to come and join the Sikh community on April 15.

[1100]

Deputy Speaker: Member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

[Applause.]

A. Dix: Well, I'm glad to get some applause, because I'm asking leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

A. Dix: I wanted to introduce members of the Armenian national community and the Armenian Canadian community of British Columbia, who are in the galleries with us today: Armenak and Anahid Deragopian; Vahe and Laura Andonian; Victor and Sonia Bedrossian; Eddie Papazian; and a friend of mine for 36 years or so, Jack Deragopian.

Hon. C. Richmond: I call private member's Motion 59.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 59 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

Motions on Notice

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE

A. Dix: I wanted to start this debate and thank members in the House on both sides for participating in the debate by reading the motion. It states:

[Be it resolved that this House recognize the genocide of the Armenians as a crime against humanity. Be it further resolved that this House urge the BC government to designate April 24th of every year hereafter throughout BC as a day of remembrance for the 1.5 million Armenians who fell victim to the first genocide of the 20th Century.]

I introduced in the galleries today some members of the Armenian Canadian community in British Columbia. I think what is true of them is true of all members of that community — that the Armenian genocide that took place between 1915 and 1923 has profoundly affected virtually every single member of that community.

Armenak Deragopian, who is with us today — when I was doing some journalism work on this ques-

tion — talked about his memory, which is typical of so many. He described to me his family history. He said:

My father's family was massacred — about 16 people. My father survived because he was working in Egypt at the time of World War I and was unable to return back to his home region. My mother managed to escape, but much of her family was massacred as well. Her father was orphaned. Her mother managed to escape to Egypt with her grandmother. Of the 300,000 people, Armenians, in my father's region, only an estimated 10,000 people survived.

That memory and the memory which I think is felt by, as I said, virtually every family — every family that I've met in the Armenian Canadian community can tell a similar story — speaks to the importance of this motion and speaks to the importance for all of us of historical memory, of acknowledging historical truth and fighting its denial every day and in every way we can.

On April 24, 1915 — probably one of the most significant, certainly one of the most tragic, days of the 20th century, the century just past — some 2,300 Armenian community leaders and intellectuals were rounded up and killed. That was the start of what would be known as the Armenian genocide, and the scope of the horror perpetrated at that time of the Ottoman empire is virtually impossible to comprehend — 1.5 million people killed in eight years because of who they were.

State policies of deportation, torture, massacre and starvation — systematic state policies. To quote Talaat Pasha, who was the interior minister of the state at the time — and he sent this message out to a governor in Aleppo — said: "You have already been informed that the government...has decided to destroy completely all the indicated persons living in Turkey. Their existence must be terminated, however tragic the measures taken may be, and no regard must be paid to either age or sex, or to any scruples of conscience."

[1105]

Caves were used as primitive gas chambers. At places such as the Hill of Margada, people who had been marched and were starving were tied together in lines and pushed off a hill into a river. One of them was shot in order to drag the rest down to their deaths.

Many of us know the stories of railway routes to Dachau and Auschwitz. Fewer of us, I think, know the route that Armenians often travelled, from Mush to Kirkuk and Mosul or from Sivas to Malatia and on to Aleppo.

Madam Speaker, genocide is defined in international law as the organized killing of people for the express purpose of putting an end to their collective existence. Well, prior to World War I there were 2.5 million Armenians in what was the Ottoman Empire, and virtually the entire population was expunged.

It's the links between this genocide — this awful event — and other genocides of the 20th century that are well known and profound. Indeed, the person who campaigned to have genocide defined at the UN, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who escaped Poland in 1941, in defining genocide spoke not just of what had

happened to the Jews of Europe but of "the slaughter of Armenians in World War I."

There is simply an avalanche of evidence about the Armenian genocide — from eyewitness reports to comprehensive inquiries. Many of our newspapers, from our newspapers here in British Columbia to across Canada, spoke of it at the time. Yet there has been a fairly systematic effort over the years — partly driven by successor governments to the Ottoman Empire and partly driven by the fact that history tends to reward those who win wars and not those who are the victims of wars — to deny that this genocide ever happened. That denial of genocide, as I think many people have said in reference to other genocides that have occurred, tends to reshape history and to kill people a second time, to demonize the dead and not those responsible.

That's why it's important today and why it's important for this House today, I think, to raise this issue of the Armenian genocide and to remind people of its importance to our history — first of all, to value the members of the Armenian Canadian community in our province and in our country and Armenians around the world. For families to have gone through such horror leaves not just an enormous legacy — an incomprehensible legacy of pain and death — but also a legacy of pain and death for generations to come, both psychological and personal, that must be validated. And those who wish to deny its existence must be fought for that reason, and those who say that to raise these issues makes it harder for people to reconcile today fail to understand that the first place we need to go for reconciliation is the truth.

When the regime changed in South Africa, they created what was called the Truth and Reconciliation Commission on those grounds — that only in knowing the truth can we find reconciliation. That's why countries around the world and provinces and jurisdictions such as Ontario and Quebec and Canada have recognized the Armenian genocide. It is our responsibility, as well, to do so and to teach it as part of history and of our history in classrooms across British Columbia.

It's not just that. There is, of course, a famous quote that's become almost cliché about history forgotten being doomed to repeat itself. But people will know and people ought to know that repeatedly in the 1920s and 1930s Adolf Hitler referred to the Armenian genocide. He said, famously, on the eve of invading Poland to his generals: "Who remembers the destruction of the Armenians?" Who remembers indeed?

Partly, I think, in raising these issues and in continuing to these raise issues, we are attacking that view that people can be expunged from history, because when people are expunged from history, other people will believe that such actions are without consequences, and surely that cannot be.

[1110]

Finally, I think, we have a special reason — because I want to give way to other people; there are many members who wish to have the opportunity to speak

today, and I don't want to give a long speech — this year to recognize the Armenian genocide in particular.

I want to talk about two people who lived in British Columbia and who were part of our community. The first is Arpine Krikorian, who was an elegant and vibrant lady involved in many aspects of the Armenian community — cultural events, relief society, helping out young students. Arpine never spoke of how she lost her entire family at a young age, eventually being sent from her Armenian village in Turkey to an orphanage in Alexandria, Egypt. She grew up without any family but was surrounded by a strong Armenian community there, almost all of them genocide survivors.

In 1993, no longer able to care for herself, she went to a nursing home in Vancouver, where she lived out the final 12 years of her life. Towards the end she would relive the horrors of the genocide with chilling, vivid nightmares from her childhood that no one could protect her from.

Kerop Shabanian, another member of the Armenian Canadian community here in British Columbia, was born in 1912 in the village of Geuldagh. He had a very difficult life, having lost many family members. During an interview in 2004 he said: "One day my brother and sister were taken, and I never saw them again. Then my mother and I were taken with others in a group and made to walk in the desert. Others had walked that trail before us, as I saw their skeletons there. There were only women and children with us."

Mr. Shabanian arrived in Canada with his son and daughter-in-law, first living in Montreal before moving to Richmond. Though hard of hearing and having poor vision later in life, he would attend every April 24 genocide commemoration, sitting near the back of the hall so as not to draw attention to himself. Invariably, emotions would get the better of him, and he would stand up in his frail body and offer a few touching words to the assembled crowd.

During this year's 91st commemoration, Kerop's seat will be empty. Kerop and Arpine both passed away last year, and they are the last known survivors of the Armenian genocide who lived in British Columbia. Their legacy, and one of the reasons it's so important to pass this motion today and support this motion today, is that with them gone, it's up to us now — their families and the Armenian Canadian community, yes, but the entire British Columbia community — to acknowledge their suffering and this suffering.

In order to build a better future for all of us, we must recognize this and fight injustice. Surely the recognition of the Armenian genocide by this Legislature today will play a small role in helping respond to that injustice.

R. Hawes: I rise today to thank the member for bringing this motion and to support the motion.

I do not have in my family history anything like what happened to the Armenian people. It's very, very difficult for one who hasn't got that kind of ancestral history to really understand the feelings of the people who do live with this every day, who carry forward

these memories of events that took place, for some, so long ago — almost 90 years ago. It's very difficult to imagine how those people feel, how the Armenian people feel.

It's very difficult to put yourself in the shoes of the survivors of the holocaust and of their families and how they feel unless you're a member of one of those families. It's very difficult, but yet I know that for them, every day the scars of those memories, the scars of what happened to their ancestors carries on, and it's a never-ending pain. I'm thankful that the member brought it forward in the way he did.

[1115]

This century has been marked with many, many tragic and horrendous events. Man's inhumanity against man carries on daily on this planet, and we don't stop anywhere near often enough to consider how this could possibly happen in today's world. We don't look at what happened yesterday and recognize that the events of yesterday, the events that are happening today all need to be recognized by all of us in order for us to somehow bring all of this to a stop.

I think about Rwanda and Somalia and what happened in Iraq. There are so many places in the world where there have been tragic events — genocide. The Armenian genocide is not one that comes to everyone's lips. That doesn't come to everyone's memory. Very little is known about it. I do concur with the member that there is a tremendous amount of effort spent trying to bury this as though nothing happened. Those members of the Armenian community know something did happen. Something tragic happened. It is important that we recognize and share their pain.

April 24 is a day of significance, but I would like to think of April 24 as a day where we don't just talk about the Armenian genocide but where we talk about man's inhumanity to man and remember that these events happened over history and stand against and unite against any further events like this.

I am pleased to be able to stand up and support this motion. My heart does go out to those members of the Armenian community that are here today and those, I know, that wanted to be here and couldn't be here. My heart goes out to those who suffered from 1915 through 1923. You can only imagine the kinds of horrible, horrible pain they suffered.

I think all of us need to reflect on what's happening in the world and how we treat our fellow man. This is as good a place as any to make that kind of remembrance begin for all of us. So thank you to the member. I will be supporting this motion, and I look forward to hearing what others have to say about it.

L. Krog: Firstly, I want to thank the member for Vancouver-Kingsway for putting this motion before the House today. I was moved by the remarks by the member for Maple Ridge-Mission when he talked about trying to contemplate and relate to this.

Here in the security of our society, where none of us fears being taken away in the night, where we don't fear persecution because of our ethnicity — and I mean

persecution in the real sense; we face discrimination in our society, but no persecution — it is hard to contemplate these events.

These events have happened throughout history. They have happened in countries that one would not have thought possible. We know that when this long pattern began, commencing in 1915, the Armenians were herded up, deported, marched — obviously, with the intention of killing them along the way.

It reminded me of what is known in American history as the Trail of Tears. In the 1830s the American government decided to remove the Cherokee peoples so that others could occupy their lands, and that time the case went to the U.S. Supreme Court. The U.S. Supreme Court decided in favour of the Cherokee. The response of Andrew Jackson, the American president at the time, was: "The chief justice has made his decision. Let him enforce it." At that time America was the great beacon of democracy for the world.

The Germany that commenced the Holocaust — the deliberate annihilation of European Jewry, of homosexuals, of those who were handicapped and disabled.... The Germany of its time was probably the most progressive nation on the face of the earth in terms of its social policy, with pensions and unemployment insurance and things that we take for granted today.

[1120]

Some of you may wonder where I'm going with this. I'm moving a little through history.

In this country, when a similar motion came to a vote in the Parliament of Canada, probably the most-favoured nation on the face of the earth today, in my view.... And it's a view that I'm sure many members share with me. The motion read: "That this House acknowledges the Armenian genocide of 1915 and condemns this act as a crime against humanity." That was just over a year ago in the Parliament of Canada; 153 voted for it, and unbelievably, 68 members of Canada's parliament voted against that motion.

They voted against it, I suspect, because they didn't wish to offend the Turkish government. They voted, I suspect, because perhaps they had a Turkish population in their own constituencies or ridings. Who knows what the reasons were? But what I can say with some conviction here this morning is that whatever the reasons were, they weren't good enough to vote against a motion that I would hope and suspect every member of this House here in British Columbia will support this morning.

If we are to move forward, if we are to provide a beacon of hope to those around the world who suffer under totalitarian regimes today, then surely, surely here this morning we can pass this motion. That's all we're being asked to do — simply to acknowledge the deaths of one and a half million people who were murdered just because, as the member for Vancouver-Kingsway put it, of who they were.

I don't think it's much to ask. I'm honoured to be able to stand here this morning and speak in favour of it in this chamber. I hope that all of the members of

this House will support this motion, because there are one and a half million souls who I think deserve the peace, the comfort and the acknowledgment of their memory and their deaths. They deserve our support, our acknowledgment this morning.

It's a precious small thing to ask, and maybe by passage of this motion today, we acknowledge a shameful piece of history and we will perhaps persuade the Turkish government to do what it must do, what it will have to do if it is truly to join the ranks of modern nations — that is, acknowledge its own past, as we in Canada have acknowledged from time to time our own misdoings, our own wrongful acts, whether it was the deportation of Japanese Canadians from the coast into internment camps, where even to this day we can't bring ourselves to acknowledge the horror of the head tax.

I'm hopeful that by passage of this motion today, we will somehow recognize our own participation in things that were racist, because what happened in Turkey with the murder of one and a half million people over time was certainly more horrific than the sins we have committed here. So let us pay honour this morning to those who passed and pay honour to the Turkish community, the Armenian community, which has called upon the Turkish government for decades to acknowledge what they did. Let us begin the reconciliation in British Columbia here. Let us pay honour to those last two survivors who passed away last year, who the member for Vancouver-Kingsway referred to. It's not too much to ask.

J. Nuraney: I, too, rise to speak on the motion presented by the member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

Our history, unfortunately, is studded by atrocities and forms of genocide. Genocide is defined by the convention on the prevention of punishment of the crime of genocide by the United Nations as an act committed "to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or a religious group." The term "genocide" was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish scholar, after the Holocaust committed by the Nazi regime during World War II. In today's context this definition has assumed a broader meaning to include acts aimed at destroying the culture and livelihoods of groups.

[1125]

As we stand today to condemn such acts of inhumanity, we must also be aware of the recent and ongoing acts of genocide that are taking place in our times. I'm referring to the acts being committed in Darfur in Sudan right before our eyes. Recent acts in countries like East Bengal, in Cambodia, in Iraq against the Kurds, in Bosnia and in Rwanda are examples of genocides that took place in recent history. The world stood by shamefully with no attempt at preventing them.

We live in a time of unparalleled instances of democide, genocide and ethnocide. As we decry the acts that took place in Armenia some 90 years ago, let me submit to this House and to the nation at large that it is our solemn duty to do everything in our power to prevent such tragedies from happening on our earth.

I will end my remarks with a quote from the Koran, the holy book of the Muslims, which says that to save a life is to save humanity and to destroy a life is to destroy humanity.

M. Sather: It indeed does give me pleasure, as well, to rise to speak in favour of this motion to recognize the Armenian genocide.

I met with a small delegation of local Armenian folks last year with regard to this issue, and I must say, to my embarrassment, that I was not aware of this genocide. That is in itself remarkable — that we are not, some of us, aware of the first genocide in the 20th century. But it does speak, surely, to the fact that it has been hidden far too long and that governments are taking action around the world to recognize the necessity of addressing that wrong. We're here today to start that process as well.

That tragedy, as we know, occurred between 1915 and 1923, during the First World War, and began on the night of April 24, 1915, when 254 Armenian intellectuals in Istanbul were arrested and murdered as part of the Ottoman Empire's so-called final solution — and thus the date we seek to honour today.

The member for Vancouver-Kingsway mentioned earlier about Hitler's references to the forgetting of the Armenian genocide, and truly, that speaks to the absolute necessity for us as peoples of the world to remember horrific acts that have happened. Of course, we all bear some responsibility for our lack of action over these many decades. And it is, of course, an encouragement to the Turkish government to take responsibility for those acts that occurred at that time. It's only through the taking of responsibility that reconciliation can happen.

[1130]

Over 2,300 of the top Armenian leaders were murdered by the Ottoman Turkish government, and in all, some one and a half million people fell victim to the genocide. When one reads the accounts, what happened is brutal beyond description. It's hard for us to imagine, thinking of this genocide or others.

The annihilation of Jews during the Second World War in Germany and beyond we know much better, of course, but it is hard to imagine those kinds of horrific acts being perpetrated on any individuals. The remembering of a death is very important; the remembering of many, many deaths is that much more important.

The genocide began, also, actually, with some quarter-million Armenian members of the Turkish army at the time being stripped of their positions and systematically eliminated, either at the time or shortly thereafter, with forced marches and the like that took place. It's led to the Armenian heartland of Turkey, very sadly, now being virtually devoid of Armenians.

The whole issue certainly speaks to the tragedy that can happen over differences — differences of religion, differences of politics. We are indeed fortunate in this country that the political or other differences that we have, have not escalated to the point of violence, but I think we can never, as a democracy, either, take it for

granted that something like this could never happen here. We must be vigilant. This is a way of, I think, stating our vigilance as well as speaking up for the Armenian peoples past and present. Thousands of those descendants of the atrocity now reside in Canada and British Columbia. As we just heard, only the last two original members have now departed us.

I, too, want to close by supporting this motion, recognizing how important it is. Certainly, to the Armenian community it's very, very significant. It's been passed in Ottawa, and it's time that we stand on board, as well, here in British Columbia and join Ontario and Quebec.

J. Yap: It's my honour to also participate in this debate on this motion. I want to start by thanking the member for Vancouver-Kingsway for working on this and for bringing this motion forward.

As has been mentioned by every speaker this morning, this episode in history speaks to the inhumanity of man against man, the inhumanity of people against people. While humankind is able to, and does, engage in great acts of kindness and compassion, there is this other side to our human nature. With the terrible, terrible killings that occurred between 1915 and 1923, this was a dramatic example of that inhumanity.

I have to admit, along with other members, that really, individually, I didn't know a lot about this terrible event. Thanks to this motion, I took the opportunity to learn more about this calamity in human history.

It is one that is not unique. It is, of course, one that occurred at the early stages of the last century, but as has already been mentioned, we have seen many, many examples of man's inhumanity. Specific ones include Cambodia; Rwanda, of course; Bosnia; and Darfur, which is the most recent one that is happening on our watch as citizens of the world.

[1135]

I think it is a testament to our blessings as Canadians, as British Columbians, to be able to live in a society that is tolerant, that is respectful of differences between different communities and different cultures. We know that we live in a multicultural land here in Canada, in British Columbia. I believe that in Canada, we in British Columbia can really set the stage and really set an example for the world in how we deal with our differences, how we respect each other, how we tolerate each other and how we can live in peace. The member for Nanaimo made this point as well, and I really appreciate that point. Our history is not without blemish, but on a scale of inhumanity, we actually can take some solace at being a tolerant and peaceable nation.

There are, of course, many sides to an issue. In my research on this motion, I discovered that, of course, the people who speak out on behalf of the people of Turkey feel that there was another side to what happened those many years ago. What is not debated, though, is that many hundreds of thousands of people, even the Turkish people admit.... Hundreds of thou-

sands of people — 600,000 people — perished that the people of Turkey admit, in their version of history. The number has been estimated as high as one and a half million, as has been mentioned. Whatever the number is, we do know that many hundreds of thousands, perhaps a million and a half people died. It appears that they died simply because of their culture, because of who they were. That, Madam Speaker, is an unspeakable tragedy on the scale of many that have happened, including the Holocaust of the Second World War.

I'm proud to be Canadian. I'm proud to be British Columbian, to be able to participate in the debate on this motion, and I support the motion. This is an opportunity for us as members of a Legislature in a democratic land to speak up, to say to the Turkish people and to the Armenian people that the time is now to start down the path of reconciliation.

The people who were directly involved in this calamity 90-plus years ago are mostly gone. We heard that two living examples of survivors from that holocaust passed away recently in British Columbia. Now it's really about the future for the people of Turkey and, more importantly, for the people of Armenia and all the people around the world, including in Canada, who have heritage from Armenia to start down this path of reconciliation. If our efforts here in this House today can help along in a small way on this path of reconciliation, then all the better.

I'd like to close by saying that one of the reasons that each of us, as members of this Legislature, step up to become members of this House is to be able to talk about issues that sometimes can be very difficult. In this case we're debating a motion which really comes to the heart of what we all believe in, which is: just as we as Canadians and British Columbians enjoy justice, peace and harmony, it is something that we can promote to all peoples of the world.

[1140]

In respect to this motion, it's my fervent hope that we as a Legislature add our voice to the people of Armenia and Turkey, to all the people with connections to Armenia and Turkey, that they start down this path to reconciliation.

J. Horgan: It's a pleasure to stand in this place today to speak in favour of this motion brought forward by my friend and colleague, the member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

I always enjoy coming to work, but today was an especially enjoyable day. Both of my teenage sons, over the course of the weekend, were wondering — as I had piles of paper strewn about, as I was coming up to speed, as a historian, on an issue of historical significance that I, until this weekend, knew very little about.... My children said: "Well, what's the deal, dad? What are you doing? What's going on?" I recounted, for them, stories of horror and brutality that shook them to their very souls. As I went through the material, and as I discussed this issue with my colleague over the past number of days, it brought home for me — and I believe all members of this House — the im-

portance of free people to protect freedom and to spread it wherever we can.

History is written every day. Today we get to participate, as British Columbians and as legislators in this place, in righting a wrong in a very small way; 79 of us will have an opportunity at the noon hour to vote in favour of a motion that is courageous, but not nearly as courageous as those who are joining us in the gallery and their ancestors. The persecution over the past 90 years is profoundly disturbing.

I don't want to take too much time because we have other speakers, and I want to be sure we vote on this motion today. My colleague from Burnaby-Willingdon inventoried some of the horrors in our recent past — in Bosnia, in Sudan and in Rwanda — and while our inhumanity to each other continues, we need to grasp humanity when we find it. Today we have that opportunity — to re-right, to correct a wrong — in a small way, as free people.

It's all well and good for the state of Turkey to deny the murder of 1.5 million people. There are arguments that it was the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the new state of Turkey that led to a demonization of the victims. History is rife with that sort of demonization. But that doesn't make it any more correct. Denial must end before reconciliation can begin. In a small way we, as legislators in British Columbia, can join with others around the world and in other jurisdictions in Canada — in Quebec and Ontario — to denounce the genocide of the Armenian people and to set aside a day, annually, when we can remember this tragedy.

As the Education critic, it's particularly troubling for me to have two children that are studying world history now and to only be able to teach them about the Armenian tragedy through the Internet and through books that I bring home.

So to answer the question from a demon: "Who remembers the Armenians?" From this day forward, let's hope that all British Columbians will remember Armenians. I know that the people in my home — my sons, my spouse and myself — will always remember the tragedy of 90 years ago. I want to thank the member for Vancouver-Kingsway for bringing it graphically to my attention and to the members of this House and the people of British Columbia.

K. Krueger: I rise, of course, to support this motion. The 2001 census for British Columbia says that there were 1,505 people at that time in British Columbia whose mother tongue is Turkish, and 900 whose mother tongue is Armenian. I thank God that I live in a province where people whose mother tongues are Turkish and Armenian and Mandarin and Cantonese and Japanese and Russian and German and.... In fact, you name a country around the world, and you can probably find British Columbians whose mother tongue is that country. I am so thankful that we live in the place that we do. But we can never take it for granted that it will remain the place we enjoy, unless we are resolved to keep it this way and to make it better.

[1145]

Why do these terrible things happen? Genocide — people attacking an entire people? I'm a Christian. I've been a Christian all my life, and I've always wondered: how could the Crusades happen? How could people — who worship a God who has said very clearly in the Bible that he hates three things above all others: a proud look, a lying tongue and feet swift to shed innocent blood — go over and, in the name of Christ, kill other people?

My mother was a refugee. My mother's family were Mennonites who had left Germany because they didn't want to be drawn into the Kaiser's wars that they knew were coming. They were welcomed to Russia by Catherine the Great. They were industrious people who worked hard and built successful farms. My grandfather owned a flour mill that he built himself. They got rich in the Ukraine. The Communists hated them because of their ability to work hard and get rich.

They were going to kill my mother's family. They killed many Mennonites. The second time they'd seized all his possessions and it was really clear to my grandfather that his family was going to be wiped out, he got away with them and fled from Russia. My mother was just a baby at the time.

It's true that these genocides go on and on throughout history, and a number of them have happened just in the very recent past. To our shame, the world has not responded to them and isn't responding to them.

There are Arab people who call themselves the Janjaweed wiping out black Africans in Darfur. Our famous general Roméo Dallaire came back from Rwanda a broken man from his awful experience in trying to stop a genocide there and seeing what happened. There was a genocide against his own people by a man named Pol Pot in Cambodia. At the time, I was a sponsor of a World Vision little girl there, and I lost touch with her completely. I don't know what happened to her.

When I was a youth, I felt terribly ashamed of my German roots, my German blood, because of my growing awareness of what Hitler did and what the Nazis did and how awful that was. I actually used to think, when I was a young teenager, that perhaps I could get a total blood transfusion so that I wouldn't have that blood in my veins anymore.

I could never do that, because my father wasn't a person who would ever have taken part in anything like that. In fact, he was the only son of his family, and there were a number of them, who volunteered to be in the Canadian army in the Second World War. He was so horrified at the thought of shooting anyone, even though he was the best shot in the family and in the military group he formed up with, that he pleaded to be allowed to be a stretcher-bearer. So he was at Normandy at the D-Day invasion as a stretcher-bearer, and he saw the mayhem around him and was horrified by it.

Those thoughts that started to form in me when I was a teenager about the shame of the inheritance that I had from my German extraction, I was eventually reconciled to by the fact that people can make a break

from these awful things that have happened in their history. They don't have to be loyal to that at all, while being loyal to their family.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

I do not blame people of Turkish extraction today for what happened to the Armenians, but I think that this motion is particularly good for British Columbia because it will establish a day where British Columbians — certainly, a lot of them — think about this awful event. We need to think about these things more, because it could happen here. It can happen anywhere. There was an Olympics held in Yugoslavia. We're looking forward to the Olympics in 2010. Olympics were held there — Sarajevo — not long before genocides were happening in Bosnia. We could name many days of the year as memorial days, and maybe we should.

This genocide started when World War I was only a year underway. People called it "the war to end all wars," and they actually believed that it was. But this was happening and went on happening for another four years after that war — twice as long as the war that was supposed to end all wars. Wars don't end genocides. What we have to do is attack the roots of genocide, and I say that the roots are racism and greed. Many times racist opportunists rise up at moments of opportunity and commit these crimes because of their greed and their desire to own what their victims owned.

I'm thankful, as I said, for our multifaceted and inclusive society. One day we had a citizenship ceremony on Canada Day in Kamloops, and I looked out at a sea of faces, new Canadians from all around the world. This thought popped into my mind as I was making my remarks to them. It was Canada Day, and I said: "You're Canada's birthday present." I've always thought of immigrants who become citizens since as birthday presents to Canada, whether it's Canada Day or not when they take their oath.

[1150]

It's wonderful to have a society that is inclusive, where a racist is a fringe person and knows it. Racism is to be shamed, and racists are to be shamed. I'm glad I live in a society where it is manifestly ridiculous to be a racist, because we live in something of a United Nations.

I'm very pleased that the member brought this motion that we will support. We will pass this motion, and we will have a day where we make sure that the Armenian genocide is remembered. Yesterday in the *Times Colonist* there was a headline, "Sectarian War Claims 14 Men Killed for a Name" — 14 men who were killed just because their name was Omar. This stuff is going on all around the world right now. I'm proud to stand against it with all of you.

M. Karagianis: I, too, rise to speak in support of this motion. I actually have an Irish history. That, indeed, is a history of economic genocide, and I am here because my ancestors in the mid-1800s fled poverty and starvation and came here as immigrants who didn't even speak the English language. It's been very

difficult to even trace our heritage because of that kind of genocide. Whatever it was they were registering their information in, in Gaelic, we've been unable to trace.

It actually has given me a rich appreciation of the human condition around the world and the circumstances of genocide. I spent some time in the former Yugoslavia in 1978 to try and rescue some friends from that country before civil war struck, when Tito was dying. I watched with great sadness what happened to that country and to my friends there in a subsequent genocide in Bosnia.

In the '80s I did some business in Southeast Asia and at one point was on a plane with a complete plane-load of Cambodian refugees escaping the horrors of their country. I remember the trip back from Southeast Asia with all of those people silent and terrified as they escaped what was happening to them in their country and ended up as refugees here.

More recently, of course, other speakers have referred to the genocide in Darfur. And of course we still have the ongoing occupation of Tibet and the genocide of the Tibetan people that occurs here in this world today.

One of the things I do know is that the root of the word "ignorance" comes from the word "to ignore." Any time in our history as human beings that we ignore the genocide of the past or the occupations and genocides that are occurring today in this world, we are all guilty of that. I think that Tibet and Darfur are living examples of the ignorance that government leaders and world leaders are participating in today.

I rise to speak in support of this motion because I think it's really important for us to commemorate the Armenian history and the tragedy of the Armenian people. It is actually a commemoration for us all in all the genocides. Perhaps it will help us to think more and to take more action on situations like Darfur and Tibet, and to act on that.

I thank the member for bringing this motion forward and urge everyone in this House not only to support this but to think about how you can act and react to all the genocides going on all over the world — even now as we speak in this House.

D. Hayer: I, too, want to express my deepest sorrow for the great tragedy that struck the Armenian people in 1915. I had a meeting with members of the Armenian community in my Surrey-Tynehead community office last year, who explained to me about this genocide of Armenians. I support this motion of the member for Vancouver-Kingsway.

[1155]

Directly throughout history these tragedies have fallen on people of all races and ancestries. In fact, only four years later than the atrocities in Armenia, mass killings occurred in my parents' homeland of Punjab, India. Thousands died before British machine guns on the day of Vaisakhi, April 13, 1919, at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar.

We hear every day of genocide: a few decades ago in Europe; a few years ago in eastern Europe; and as

we speak, in Africa; and we all remember Rwanda. It is stunning that in a world that prides itself on being civilized, we face, almost on a daily basis, the deliberate slaughter of so many innocent people for no reason other than race, religion or political belief.

I believe we do need a special day to honour the memory of those who have been lost through the hateful wrongs of others, but we do also need to remember every day that there are terrible things happening in this world and that we all must stand and work tirelessly to ensure that one day those tragedies will not be permitted to happen again. When we do recognize a special day for all the atrocities of mankind, I hope that it will be one that acknowledges the suffering of all people who have faced such tragedy, including that of the Armenians.

In closing, I do support the motion of the member for Vancouver-Kingsway. I hope we learn from this so that we can stop history from repeating itself.

R. Fleming: I'd like to also thank my colleague from Vancouver-Kingsway and all of the speakers this morning for debating this important, long-overdue motion. The 38th parliament has an opportunity today to join with parliaments around the world and the National Assembly of Quebec, the Ontario provincial parliament, the House of Commons and the Senate of Canada to recognize that the Armenian people were victims of crimes against humanity, of an organized campaign of extermination orchestrated in 1915 by the Ottoman Empire under the cover of the First World War.

All of us in this House support the international movement in the march of human rights, democracy and the freedom to live in multicultural societies and nations which embrace and respect the rights of all minorities. These are values that we hold strongly, and they abide in us wherever we see fit to fight against hatred and the covering of it and those who persist in historical revisionism and the denial of one of humanity's darkest chapters.

Two summers ago I had an opportunity to travel to Yellowknife, where among my itinerary I met and socialized with a large group of skilled diamond-cutters from Armenia who were in Canada on multi-year work permits. I thought I should correct them that Northwest Territories was not representative of all of Canada and explained some of the other parts of our country — this southern region where we are, and Victoria, B.C.

I don't think I was breaking through all of the language barriers, but when I mentioned the name Victoria, B.C., and that it was the home where Atom Egoyan grew up — one of our best film-makers in this country, who has documented the story of the Armenian people in the film *Ararat* — that's when I broke through and had a really meaningful discussion with these Armenians who were working and living in Canada.

I could see that it was a moment that the Armenian diaspora and the modern-day Armenian descendants and survivors of the 1915 genocide were given hope by the recognition of Mr. Egoyan's film and by the memory of the world community for their suffering in that 1915 genocide. Let British Columbia join with that world community that has recognized that occurrence today.

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no further speakers.... Hon. members, you've heard the motion.

Motion approved.

[Applause.]

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 12 noon.

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