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SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, MARCH 20, 2006

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

Prayers.

Private Members' Statements

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

C. Evans: I rise today to speak on the subject of post-traumatic stress disorder for emergency workers. I advised the Minister of Labour two weeks ago that I intended to speak on this subject, because it was my hope to prepare the government for this discussion and, I hope, dialogue. It's my desire to look for a solution to a problem which I believe exists in the Workers Compensation Act rather than partisan politics at this time.

In 2002 the government of the day changed the provisions of the Workers Compensation Act, especially as they refer to the subject of post-traumatic stress disorder for emergency workers. They added some provisions that are sections 5.1(a), (b) and (c) in the Workers Compensation Act, the gist of which is section 5.1(a), which says that you cannot claim post-traumatic stress disorder unless it "is an acute reaction to a sudden and unexpected traumatic event"; (b) suggests that you can't claim unless it is diagnosed by a physician or a psychologist and (c), the stress is not caused by a decision of the worker's employer.

What is now WorkSafe B.C. changed those provisions essentially to say that there needed to be a single moment of trauma for any worker such as a firefighter or a policeman to claim post-traumatic stress disorder.

[1005]

In 2002 I met a constituent of mine, Darren Gregory, in Creston, who had been a paramedic. He explained his situation to me relating to post-traumatic stress disorder. Following that event I did some research. I talked to policemen. I talked to emergency room nurses. I spoke to paramedics. I spoke to firemen. And I came to the conclusion that the changes to the act — which I think were brought in by the government in what they felt was a benign way, intending a healthy outcome — in fact have had quite a devastating outcome to emergency workers.

Prior to 2002 workers who claimed post-traumatic stress disorder usually lost their claim but could win on appeal. That appeal was based on medical testimony suggesting that the worker had indeed experienced a cumulative stress that rendered them unable to do their job. Since those changes in 2002 there was no recognition for the cumulative impact of the experiences of emergency workers.

I accept section 5.1, which suggests that there needs to be a doctor's diagnosis. That makes sense. I accept 5.1(c), which suggests that the stress is not caused by the employer. That makes complete sense. I do not accept, however, the requirement that there be a single

traumatic event before a worker can claim to have experienced post-traumatic stress disorder.

The changes also require, under the policy of WorkSafe B.C., that the board not consider the experience of the worker but solely a singular event that they can point to and say: "Following that event, I was rendered unable to do my job." The policy of WorkSafe B.C. appears to be that because emergency workers are trained to do emergency work, nothing related to their training can cause stress. I find that ridiculous.

Soldiers are trained extensively for their job in battle, and yet we all know that some soldiers experience post-traumatic stress regardless of their training. I was trained to be an industrial first-aid attendant. I worked my way up to class "B." You look at gory pictures in your training, and you hear lots of stories. You practise, but nothing actually prepares you for arriving on an automobile accident or an industrial accident. That is an experience which is beyond training.

I would argue that to suggest that there needs to be a singular event that a worker can point to, rather than the cumulative effect of their job, before they can qualify for post-traumatic stress disorder is to negate the impacts of doing their work.

We all know about silicosis. Silicosis has been largely resolved by the safety provisions now in the mining industry, but historically you did not get silicosis from a singular event. You got it from the cumulative effects of working in a dangerous environment. That, I think, is the situation for emergency room nurses, paramedics, firemen and policemen, and it needs to be recognized by WorkSafe B.C.

My request is that the government engage WorkSafe B.C., emergency workers and their unions and their advocates, doctors trained in post-traumatic stress disorder and MLAs of both parties in reconsideration of section 5.1(c) of the Workers Compensation Act to consider the long-term effects of post-traumatic stress. And should cases of post-traumatic stress disorder among emergency workers be adjudicated during that period of review, I would request that the requirement that there be a single moment of trauma be suspended in favour of medical testimony from doctors specializing in post-traumatic stress disorder.

I am happy to hear the government's response, and I hope what happens here is not an argument but a dialogue leading to resolution of what I think is a well-meaning law which has turned out badly and now needs to be changed.

D. MacKay: I'd like to thank the member for Nelson-Creston for his words on post-traumatic stress disorder.

[1010]

It's an issue that involves the mind, and it is difficult to establish one incident, an event, that would cause a person to have the post-traumatic stress disorder. It's not new. It's been with us for a long time. It's been with us since ancient times, and it actually was first recorded back during the American Civil War. What we call post-traumatic syndrome today used to be called Da Costa's syndrome during the American

Civil War. It is something that many of us in this chamber have experienced. Thank goodness, in most cases, many of us have returned to normal — whatever that is. Some people who have actually experienced a traumatic event will have stress reactions, and they will not go away on their own.

I would like to comment very briefly on a couple of cases of post-traumatic stress syndrome. The first one I'm going to comment on is well-known Canadian Lt. Gen. Romeo Dallaire. He was in Rwanda in 1994 in charge of the peacekeeping during the unrest in that country. His story is well-documented in the book *Shake Hands with the Devil*, and if you haven't read it, you should, to understand what he experienced while in his role as the man responsible for peacekeeping in a country that saw over 800,000 people hacked to death with machetes. His return to Canada and his attempt at suicide and the struggle that he experienced to get his life back in order, in my view, is a classic example of what the member for Nelson-Creston just spoke about. I understand that a movie has been made of the events in Rwanda, and today he has regained control of his life.

Another classic and sad case of post-traumatic stress syndrome involves a young lady by the name of Patricia Van Tighem, who was attacked by a grizzly bear in 1983. She suffered severe facial disfigurement, and her left eye was lost in that event. Her story is written in a book called *The Bear's Embrace*. She struggled for years with painful reconstructive surgery, and last year at the early age of 47 years she took her own life. There is another classic example of a young person who was not able to cope with that event when the grizzly bear attacked her and disfigured her so terribly. She actually took her life. In one case we've got Mr. Dallaire, who was able to get his life back together with a great deal of support, and another young lady who wasn't able to cope with it.

We shouldn't forget for a moment about the young military people we have serving around the world, and the U.S. troops in Iraq. Some of the sights that those people will experience.... They will see body parts blown apart. They will see gunshot wounds that they'll never forget. That's going to have a huge impact on those young people when they return to Canada and the United States.

On a personal note, as an RCMP officer, I heard the member talk about first responders. We saw many things that were disturbing as we attended motor vehicle accidents. Some of our members were often shaken and disturbed by what we saw, but we didn't know what to do about those disturbing sights. After all, we were policemen. Mr. Dallaire was a man. He was expected to be able to handle some of those situations. The reality is that a lot of people aren't able to handle those situations.

So what did we do as police officers when we encountered eventful experiences — car accidents, sudden deaths from suicides, gunshot wounds? Well, quite often we would sit around, and we would talk about it. The ability to sit around and talk about events was a form of release, and sometimes we did it after-hours

over a beer. That's how we got through that post-traumatic stress syndrome, as we call it today. We interacted with one another, we shared experiences, and we got through those experiences.

I also experienced similar situations as a coroner. I saw some sights that most of you probably don't ever want to see. Following some of those rather unfortunate incidents, they had these critical incident debriefing sessions, once again where people had an opportunity to sit down and discuss what they had seen. It was a form of release, and that's where a lot of the black humour, some of the bad jokes that come out about death....

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, member.

[1015]

C. Evans: I thank the member for his response. The member acknowledged in his opening comment that post-traumatic stress disorder is in fact real, and then used the excellent example of Romeo Dallaire as an individual for whom post-traumatic stress disorder came from a cumulative experience rather than a singular event.

Unfortunately, the member — and no representative of the government and the minister — did not make any commitment to my request that we then, as a group, in a non-partisan way, review the legislation to allow workers to have a legitimate appeal in the absence of a singular event. I'm assuming that the minister is busy at this moment, that he actually agrees with me and that at some time in the next few days there will be an opportunity for the minister to....

[Interruption.]

C. Evans: I am assuming that at some point over the next few days, the government, some member of the government, will say that they desire to review this legislation in order that all workers might have a fair opportunity at the Workers Compensation Board or WorkSafe B.C. hearings. Therefore, I will remain ever hopeful for about a week or two. After that, a very unfortunate situation is going to come about. I'm going to decide that the government doesn't want to fix it for workers. This, I think, which is a general societal issue that we can all agree on, might turn into an unfortunate partisan issue.

I'm just going to take my seat and wait a couple of weeks in the assumption that something lovely will happen. If it doesn't happen, hon. Speaker, the next time you see me I'm going to assume that the government in fact intended to discount emergency workers from the ability to get post-traumatic stress support when they've been rendered unable to do their job simply for the things that they experienced trying to benefit society.

KAMLOOPS FOOD BANK

K. Krueger: I'm here today to relate an inspiring story of how an organization in my constituency is on

the road to developing food security in the Thompson region. I asked the volunteers to write this story for me, and they've written more than I can probably say in the time allotted, so I'm going to speak very fast and be reading much of it.

The Kamloops Food Bank/Action Centre goes back over 27 years, having been started in the basement of the Kamloops United Church by Hank Woodlands in 1977 to meet the needs of street people and the homeless at that time. The need for food was something the downtown church took seriously, and it partnered with three other churches, including Catholic and Anglican, to form the Kamloops Food Bank and Outreach Society.

The basement food cupboards quickly became too small, and the food bank moved several times over the following 20 years, as the need for access to food grew in Kamloops. Developed as a stopgap to meet emergency food needs in the '70s and funded solely by private donations from the public, churches and business and service groups, the Kamloops Food Bank has provided non-sectarian emergency food relief to disadvantaged people in an admirable way.

The North Thompson Valley fires of 2003 put extreme pressure on the Kamloops Food Bank, as they struggled to meet the needs of the beleaguered citizens of Barriere, Louis Creek and elsewhere and received and stored foods for them. With a staff of six already serving 24,000 people each year, the board of directors, led by Bob Paille, and many community volunteers stepped in to help with the difficult situation. But worse was to come. The fire's fundraising tapped out the funds available for all community groups in Kamloops, with Kamloops' citizens and service groups having given everything they had to help the citizens of McLure and area. Fundraising continued with little result, leaving the food bank and its clients without support.

In 2004 a new executive director was retained — Marg Spina, a famous Kamloops community leader who's done many, many positive things for the people of Kamloops. When Marg came on board in August, the food bank van had just burned out its transmission, putting pickups of food on hold. There was a deficit budget, and community emergency food needs had grown. Volunteers had burned out because of the extreme workloads of the past year, and all the regular sources of donations in Kamloops were experiencing donor fatigue. Marg told me that the long lineups of people, children and families were overwhelming, since the food bank cupboards were empty.

[1020]

The first order of the day was to lay off staff, but in the case of one woman who had worked as a volunteer for the food bank for years and who had worked up from being a client and had two teenaged children to support as a single parent, Marg just couldn't do it. Instead, Marg sat down with the three remaining staff, and they all put part of their salaries into the pot to support their fellow staff member, tore down an office and created an instant thrift shop to develop a revenue

stream. The staff member then became the part-time thrift store manager, assisted by a wonderful community senior, Mr. Joe Shields.

Marg then decided to change the operation and philosophy of the food bank from one of simply handing out food hampers to one of capacity-building. Watching the faces of the families and children lining up for food at the door, she saw how undignified receiving emergency food hampers was for the people who needed to be there. So it was time to change the way the food bank regarded clients.

From then on, clients were the food bank's most valuable resource, to be treated as potential volunteers, future workers and supporters. Instead of handouts, it was an opportunity to find out what else the food bank clients needed and to change the way they were served. It sounds simple, yet it was to prove profound in the change it made to the heart and soul and the actual viability of the Kamloops Food Bank operations.

Each client receiving a hamper would be asked if they could help out in some way and encouraged to fill out a volunteer form and get on board. The sharing of the work would create a sharing of food needed and build a more dignified access to foods needed by the person. The Kamloops Food Bank and Outreach Society made it official by changing the name of the Kamloops Food Bank to the Kamloops Food Bank/Action Centre to reflect what we wanted to achieve: food action plans and food security in our community.

Changing the role of clients to valued resource meant new programming. How could we ask those who had nothing to work for nothing? Yet the reward could not be financial, or it would affect the incomes they often had. So what could the action centre offer in return? If people were hungry, how could they work a full shift? What about the other things that would be helpful to volunteers?

A new system required volunteer incentives. So the volunteers were surveyed to see what would work. The volunteers told us they were lonely; needed an opportunity to meet others; wanted to learn new skills, especially computers; and needed more than just food, clothing and sometimes bedding. We found that a hot, nutritious, protein-rich meal at lunchtime was not only helpful to the clients and volunteers but also to seniors, who often were living alone and not eating healthy meals.

The daily, free hot-lunch program, which includes everyone at the food bank at lunchtime, came about with the assistance of our wonderful seniors who volunteered to cook each and every day. The volunteer group grew greatly from just that one initiative. Knowing that a warm, family-style lunch where everyone connects and eats together was a powerful social motivator. As well, people living on their own, struggling with mental health issues, loneliness or boredom, quickly met new friends and developed new interests. By helping others, they helped themselves, and most powerful, the simple benefit of human connection has made a lifelong difference.

Food action centre volunteers have many unique opportunities to use their skills and talents as well as

learning new ones. With a food warehouse, kitchen, community workshops happening weekly, fundraising events, food pickups, computer refurbishing and the thrift shop, it is hard for volunteers not to have a positive experience — helping them to realize their value to the food bank.

The new volunteer incentive program is not based on cash values. Rather it is based on what the volunteers really need. Food is not enough. For the hours worked by volunteers, they receive points. These are calculated monthly and can be traded for goods in the thrift shop, so those not having money for extras can pick up clothing, shoes, bedding or anything the thrift shop offers. The prices in the thrift store range from 25 cents to \$2 — low enough for those who don't want to volunteer but still need necessities of life. But volunteers can earn what they need easily. Best of all, it gives seniors on fixed incomes a chance to give gifts using their points. For those volunteering eight hours a day, there is a long-term loan of a refurbished computer, which is based on earning 300 points for adult volunteers and 100 points for our children's after-school program. To maintain this operation takes many, many volunteers. During the three-week period in December, mentioned earlier, volunteers put in 2,910 hours.

Often running the next program to come on board was the Kiwanis elder mentor program, run by full-time community seniors at the Kamloops Food Bank. This program links community seniors to young struggling families and their children and provides real-world advice on cooking through the community kitchens, parenting and human connection through working together at the Kamloops Food Bank.

Joe Shields, the Kiwanis elder mentor coordinator, is also a Kamloops Food Bank centre board director. Joe can be found at the little house just across the street from Kamloops Food Bank.

C. Trevena: I'd like to thank the member for Kamloops-North Thompson for giving us the opportunity to talk about the Kamloops Food Bank/Action Centre and food banks. The food action centre is a two-storey building in an industrial estate. There are some houses nearby; there are industries. I think there are some garages down the road. There's a school at the top of the hill. In the parking lot there is a little area where there is a small community garden starting up.

[1025]

The people who work there — the staff and the volunteers — are people who are very, very dedicated. They want to help others in their community. They want to give that sense of food security. Part of their mission statement is to feed the hungry, and those people who are hungry are kids, moms and dads, seniors and street people. It is a centre for the community, and it's a very active centre. Kids are playing there at spring break. There were activities organized for them. There is an after-school program for kids, so the kids can get messages about food security, about how they can have nutritious food, about how to cook and about what to eat.

When I was there, the kids were there. They had just come back from swimming. One of the volunteers had taken them swimming, and in front of them there was a big bowl of salad. There were apples. They were snacking and were clearly enjoying themselves. But there was something I found very, very sad — that kids are playing at a food bank. No matter how much that is the centre of the community, kids use that as their playground.

Last year the Kamloops food action centre fed nearly 8,000 children — 8,000. One in four of the users at the Kamloops Food Bank is a child. More than 23,000 people in all used the food action centre for supplies last year — about the size of a small city — which translates to one in four of the users at the food action centre being a child. Like our provincial poverty rates, one in four food bank users there is a child.

Volunteers told me that it's great. The kids who go there regularly are doing much better in school. Their teachers report on how well they're doing. Yes, they are doing much better because they're not hungry now. Food banks do great work. There's no question about that.

The Kamloops one offers hampers for prenatal mothers and for moms with babies once a week. Thanks to the generosity of the people of Kamloops, young moms and their babies aren't going to bed hungry. But that's thanks to charity. Last month the food action centre gave out 75 baby hampers. They've also got diapers and toiletries because, to be honest, moms on income assistance can't afford to feed their kids and get clothes and transport and all the other things we take for granted.

Lots of people who use the food banks are on income assistance — one-third of them in Kamloops. It says a great deal about our assistance rates. What I find one of the most terrifying statistics about the Kamloops food action centre is that a quarter of the people using the food banks have no income at all — none. The volunteers and the workers there can create a great spirit and can help out. But how do people really live?

We do hear a lot from the members opposite about the dismal decade of the '90s when there was, as the member opposite quite rightly says, a food bank in Kamloops that 12,000 people used. Ten years later, the numbers using that food bank have doubled. We have 97 food banks in B.C. This is booming B.C., where kids are relying on food banks, where seniors are relying on food banks. It's a booming economy where 75,000 people last year used food banks, relied for their nutrition on food banks — 75,000 people.

Food banks have become such a part of the fabric of our society that we applaud those that do well, those that raise lots of money and get lots of donations. We all help at food banks and give donations, volunteer, do our bit. They are part of our communities. But I think that by integrating them into our social fabric, we are accepting iniquitous levels of poverty. We're accepting that the social safety net has gone and that all that is left is the net provided by hard-working, honest, committed volunteers who are gluing it together by donations of peanut butter and macaroni.

I think the gilt is coming off this golden decade, Mr. Speaker. You don't have to scratch too much to see what's really there. Kamloops is a generous place. There are very good-hearted people who work in soup kitchens.

[1030]

K. Krueger: The Kamloops Food Bank and outreach society's statistics are not a negative but a sign of the tremendous success of Marg Spina and her team. They're helping people learn self-sufficiency. They're enhancing nutrition, especially for children but right across the spectrum of age groups, very much in line with the government's ActNow initiatives. They're allowing prevention of negative health outcomes that people would otherwise certainly experience. Many people have grown up in our society not understanding nutrition and not knowing how to even prepare food for themselves. They haven't learned these things, and it's wonderful that they can learn them at the Kamloops Food Bank from seniors mentoring them. It's good for the seniors and everyone concerned.

Marg Spina developed a food-share program. She purchased a truck from Toronto and had a volunteer bring it west. It travels around to Save-On-Foods and all the Cooper's stores in Kamloops, who donate all of their food that is reaching its best-before date — perishables of many kinds: vegetables, meat, dairy products. That truck distributes that food to the New Life Mission, the Salvation Army and other places. There are always between 13 and 19 places in Kamloops, run by wonderful volunteers and societies, where the needy can obtain free meals and get good, solid, nutritious food; 25,000 pounds of food per month is delivered by that truck.

When Jesus walked this earth, his advice to the rich young ruler who came to him was: "Sell everything you have, give it to the poor, and follow me." But Jesus also told those who reproached a woman for anointing his head with expensive oil: "You will always have the poor with you." We will always have the poor with us, contrary to what some of our friends across the way believe. The member from Nanaimo said recently in this House that the answer to poverty is money, and it isn't. The answer to poverty is empowerment. There's an old slogan that if you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; if you teach a man to fish, you feed him for life.

I was talking at the end of my first comments about Joe Shields, the wonderful Kiwanis elder-mentor coordinator, who can be found at the little house across the street from the food bank, giving snacks and milk to moms and babies, scheduling drop-in support groups for mothers struggling to parent and feed their children. His project connects the parents with a powerful resource — our seniors — and thereby addresses the need for capacity-building in the seniors as well as the young parents. This innovative program provides a way for families to learn how to help others, even when they need a hand themselves. It takes them from victim to volunteer, builds human understanding, compassion and capacity. Volunteering is a concept

that is learned through being with positive role models and personally experiencing activities.

It is all about empowerment — to provide better access for families to healthy, nutritious foods and school snacks, to provide volunteer opportunities for neighbourhood seniors who otherwise lack opportunities to interact in a meaningful way with children and their parents, to provide learning opportunities for young children through creating dehydrated fruits and fruit leathers to provide healthy snacks for themselves and others.

I was too busy last summer, for example, to harvest my own plums. They did it. They dry it. They teach kids to feed themselves.

AIR QUALITY

G. Gentner: Mr. Speaker, I wish you the very best on this spring equinox. Therefore, I suppose this topic on air quality is quite in keeping. The freedom to breathe clean air is a human right. The province of British Columbia must be committed to minimizing the risk to public health from air pollution.

About six summers ago I, with a colleague, hiked up Mount Cheam from the Bridal Falls portion around the western ridge and witnessed the brown haze between Sardis and Sumas Mountain. Beyond in the west, Vancouver Island and the Georgia Strait were not visible until we reached an elevation of above 5,000 feet, which was high enough to give us a view over the pollution. There it sat — an inversion layer of toxins hanging over a windless lower Fraser Valley Basin, still captured by mountains. What captured me most was the stinging of the eyes when we ascended through the ozone.

Over many years, improving air quality has been discussed often in this House. It has been alleged that air pollution has been curbed and that legislation has been effective. I don't believe that. In 25 years we will see an additional one million people living and breathing within the lower mainland airshed. With such a huge demographic change and the cyclonic nature of our Fraser Valley airshed, remedial and preventive actions to reduce emissions from human activities must be enforceable by law.

[1035]

Under section 31 of the Environmental Management Act, the GVRD has been granted the responsibility for managing the quality of air in the region. The five main pollutants are directly or indirectly formed as by-products of industrial activities and the burning of fossil fuels. The common pollutants are sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, ground-level ozone and suspended particulates. Of these pollutants, CO₂, ozone and specifically particulate represent the combustion of diesel fuel and the burning of wood waste. These fine particles are the by-products of wood burning, smaller than 2.5 micrometres across or less than 1/40 the width of a human hair.

Things were looking good in the GVRD. We had a government moving forward that introduced AirCare

and seriously addressed levels of hydrocarbons. Of course, it was a time when natural gas prices were reasonable as well. But the growing concern today is that of particulate. Researchers from the New York University School of Medicine have found that every ten-microgram increase in fine particulate matter per cubic metre of air produces a 6-percent increase in the risk of death by cardiopulmonary disease and an 8-percent increase by lung cancer.

I bring attention to particulate, because industrial pollution is the biggest threat to the air of my constituents. As fuel costs escalate, many industries are lobbying to compromise air standards in order to keep a competitive advantage. In Delta and surrounding municipalities, we see the accumulation of wood-burning waste by the greenhouse industry and horrendous particulate from the freighters at Deltaport — ships that are burning diesel bunker fuel.

The GVRD monitors air control and controls the industrial, commercial and some residential sources of air pollution, and it creates long-term plans and emission inventories. The act states that the GVRD "may, by bylaw, prohibit, regulate and otherwise control and prevent the discharge of air contaminants." The GVRD can develop local air quality management programs and enhance public awareness, but if legislation is lacking an enforcing mechanism to force compliance, every human being in the region is left with rights that are compromised.

In 2004 the Liberal government replaced the Waste Management Act with the environment act and the waste discharge regulation. In essence, it deliberately undermined the authority of the GVRD. All the talk about giving local and regional government more autonomy was nothing more than a façade. Under the previous act, any decision in regard to the making of an order, imposition of a requirement, etc., could be appealed if the person was aggrieved by this decision. This was fair enough.

However, the government's new legislation made enforcement onerous. Appealing the decisions of the Environmental Appeal Board includes any decision in regards to the making of an order or imposition of a requirement, but it includes the ability to appeal the sentence. What's now in doubt is certainty itself for the GVRD, because the administrative penalty can be delayed for years before actual compliance, if any. It further forces the GVRD to compromise the health and environment of the Fraser Valley airshed in order to get any result — good, bad or indifferent. The Liberal environmental act virtually tied the GVRD's hands.

Under the new system, low-risk — however defined — polluters are essentially deregulated, and minimum-risk facilities will eventually be permitted and regulated under codes of practice. These changes pose significant threats to air quality in the GVRD. This notion defies logic, because what is at risk is a cumulative effect of all risks — low, medium or high.

Let's look at the Liberal record. Let's look at a case in point, a case that is caught between the transition from one reasonable law to the new Liberal era of de-

ception. In early 2002 natural gas prices soared, and greenhouses began using alternate fuels to heat their operations. One operation has six natural gas heaters but had been using wood-fired heaters, as well, for many years. The GVRD decided it was time to clean things up.

In 2001 the GVRD refused to amend the permitting to use wood-burning, and the greenhouses appealed to the Environmental Appeal Board. The GVRD could not enforce compliance, and the EAB declined to hear the appeal on the basis that it did not have any jurisdiction. The company commenced a petition seeking orders that the board's decision had no jurisdiction and, therefore, that no permit was needed.

[1040]

In short, the matter ended in the Supreme Court, when the judge finally ruled last summer that the EAB did have jurisdiction after all, and now the matter once again has been remitted back to the board for a hearing. Five years of particulate — five years.

V. Roddick: Maintaining clear air is a priority for this government. A recent environmental trends report makes it clear that air quality in Greater Vancouver and the Fraser Valley has actually improved in recent years.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

We want that trend to continue. The air quality plans prepared by the GVRD and the Fraser Valley regional district are a step in the right direction. In fact, thanks to working closely with the GVRD, I was able to negotiate a mobile monitoring station for Delta South over two years ago so that we could have concrete data to work with and compare as we deal with increased traffic not only in Delta South but throughout the Fraser Valley.

We as a government continue to oppose the Sumas Energy 2 project. We in opposition stopped SE2. The NDP did not even intervene.

We should also recognize that transportation and buildings contribute to 50 percent of greenhouse gas emissions in British Columbia. Investing in green buildings is important to B.C. We do that through the Green Buildings B.C. program. Right now over 20 health and education sector buildings are in the process of becoming green. Just this fall, this government announced a new strategy for energy efficiency in buildings to promote cost-effective ways for homeowners, builders and tradespeople to conserve energy and improve energy efficiency in buildings. That strategy will result in up to \$1.2 billion in energy savings for consumers throughout British Columbia by the year 2020.

We are committed to getting people out of their cars. We have been actively working to promote alternative energy for personnel and fleet use here in B.C., including support for biodiesel and \$17 million in fuel-cell research and development.

We have been able to upgrade our Waste Management Act due to increased technology, which reflects

enormous improvements in stack filtering systems. It doesn't matter what you burn; it's the particulate content that comes out of the stack that is the key issue.

In our latest budget we committed to an exemption from PST up to a maximum of \$2,000 for hybrid cars; a two-year PST exemption for energy-efficient furnaces, boilers and heat pumps; a partial exemption from the property school tax for environmentally friendly hydroelectric projects; and \$5 million to increase the capacity of the environmental assessment office. Government is also providing more than \$309,000 for various projects to promote clean air, including \$57,000 to the University of British Columbia for research in green technology in building design and to help communities find solutions to local air quality issues — something Delta groups could access; \$50,000 to the British Columbia Lung Association, which contributes to such projects as the state-of-the-air report, the community air quality health lecture series, the annual air quality health workshop and other technical studies; and \$165,000 to the Fraser Basin Council to host provincial forums on airshed planning in 2006 and 2007 and also to help develop the green fleet certification system.

Industries, too, are doing their part. The Vancouver Port Authority, for instance, is working on various initiatives, including testing fuel additives which reduce ship-sourced airborne pollutants.

[1045]

Air pollution will not be solved by government alone. All levels of government, industry and residents must look for solutions to improve air quality. Walk, ride, car-pool or take public transit around town. Turn off lights and your computer. Use energy-efficient appliances to reduce your energy consumption.

We will continue to review all our programs to make sure they're effectively and efficiently supporting our long-term strategy for dealing with pollution and climate change. We have been working and will continue to work with regions across the province on programs that promote clean air and support our climate change strategy.

G. Gentner: The member across talks about the need to find solutions and about working with the Delta port authority people.

Well, a real solution is the power to enforce the law. We have in Delta a situation where for five years we have seen a violator that's been able to hold things up in the court. To this day, the GVRD still can't resolve the issue of the wood-burning waste particulates hitting our atmosphere.

The point of the matter is that the government knows that the GVRD cannot enforce the law, because the readings are based on ambient air, and it cannot be identified as to which stack that ambient air is coming from. The act has got to be strengthened whereby each stack is monitored. If it's not, it won't hold up in court.

I began the discussion by talking about the haze hanging over the lower mainland, and clearly, this government still operates in a fog of its own. I do remember beehive burners along the Fraser and False

Creek. I remember all of it during the early '60s — the continuous blaring of fog horns and the inability to see your hand in front of your face.

Climate change is occurring worldwide, and British Columbia has a global responsibility to reduce its greenhouse emissions, thereby minimizing its contributions to global climate change.

Now, regarding health. Dr. David Bates — professor of medicine at UBC, considered a major international expert on the health effects of air pollution — has stated: "Fine particles are associated with increased mortality from respiratory and cardiovascular causes. They're also associated with increased hospital admissions for asthma, pneumonia, depressed lung function and increased respiratory symptoms in children, and possibly significant changes in heart rate in the elderly."

According to a health and air quality study conducted by the B.C. Lung Association and carried out in the lower Fraser Valley, the daily risk of dying for people over the age of 65 is increased by about 4 percent on an ambient high-pollution day compared with that of a low-pollution day. The study also looked at Port Alberni and children and provided.... It shows that there is definitely a major linkage between the amount of asthmatic cases in that industrial town relative to the amount of pollution.

A report out of Yale University asserted that exposure to particulate matter significantly enhances the risk of respiratory symptoms, increased asthma medication use and reduced lung function.

BULLYING IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

L. Mayencourt: It is a great privilege to stand today and talk about something I feel very passionate about, and that is bullying in our school system — not that I want to embrace it, but rather, I want to fight it. I want to take it on, and I want to make sure there is a difference made in the lives of kids in British Columbia.

It is evident over the past decade that bullying has evolved into a widespread problem here in British Columbia. We've seen it take some very nasty forms, including the deaths of several students. I think of Hamed Nastoh, a young boy from Surrey who was accused of being gay in his school system, who took his own life by jumping off the Pattullo Bridge many years ago.

[1050]

I think of Dawn-Marie Wesley, who was ostracized by girls in her school, threatened that she would be beaten up or even killed, who took her own life in the basement of her home. I think of Reena Virk, who was beaten senseless and drowned here in this city, in Esquimalt.

I think of people like Azmi Jubran, a young man who was tormented for four years based on an idea that he was gay. That young man very courageously went forward and took a stand on behalf of people like Hamed, people like Dawn-Marie, people like Reena. He fought, through the Human Rights Tribunal, to ensure that school districts recognize that they have a

need and a responsibility to address bullying in their school system — between students, between students and teachers, between teachers and teachers, or between teachers and other adults in the system.

In 2003, I had the great privilege of travelling this province as the chair of the Safe Schools Task Force. Something that I really enjoyed was being able to talk to dozens and dozens of educators and school administrators. But more importantly, I heard from literally thousands of British Columbia students who dealt with bullying every day. While Hamed Nastoh, Dawn-Marie Wesley, Reena Virk and Azmi Jubran ended up on the front pages and on the six o'clock news, these kids suffered in silence in their own schools. I think that's a shame.

I want to share with you some of the issues that came forward. I will share with you the words of a grade five student who had been teased relentlessly and physically abused by her schoolmates. "I was living in a world of pain at school. For around four weeks I had three friends, who I won't name. They stopped being my friends because they were being made fun of too. It got so bad that I'd cry every day before and after school." Unable to cope with the stress, she told us that she had attempted suicide. "I was so mad and upset when I got home. Without anyone knowing, I tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide by suffocating myself. When I heard my parents coming, I stopped."

A young man spoke to us about being bullied in his school because of his disability.

Bashing my skull repeatedly with their knuckles, spitting on me, kicking me in the most painful place any male can be kicked — without provocation — and dumping the computer equipment I depended upon into the garbage were among the many assaults that I was forced to endure many times in the presence of school staff and in the classroom.

A reasonable person might assume that these sorts of actions would be met with punishment. Given their routine nature, a reasonable person might also assume that the perpetrators were either suspended or expelled. That simply did not happen. Anarchy went on unabated. Leniency was the name of the game, and I was its perennial loser.

In fact, it was I and not my tormentors that was assessed, analyzed and punished. It was I who was often the one sent to the principal's office, as a twisted logic reigned that defending myself was somehow a greater evil than that perpetrated by my attackers.

I've stood in this House many, many times, and I have talked about the need for a fundamental shift in our school system. I'm going to talk about it again today. In 2003, I said: "Making our schools safer will take a fundamental shift in our school culture. Each of us must demonstrate a renewed respect for the diversity of our people. We have to ensure that the values and principles that are the cornerstone of Canadian society are honoured, respected and taught in our school system."

Today you will hear a lot about the different people in British Columbia that make up our community. We'll talk about the Indo-Canadian community. We'll talk about the Iranian community. We will talk about people that have made a difference in British Columbia

just through what they've brought from their home countries and how it is important for us to recognize their value, to understand their traditions and to honour them.

A couple of weeks ago we similarly honoured women in this Legislature. We know that women have been wrongly treated through many generations. And we've made changes in racism. We've made changes to fight sexism.

There's another piece that needs to be addressed, and that's homophobia. I'm a gay man. I care deeply about this issue, not because someone has tormented me but rather because it seems to be an acceptable form of bullying in our school system. It's time for every member of this Legislature, every school district employee, every trustee and every politician in British Columbia to stand up to bullying, no matter what drives it, no matter what happens.

[1055]

Some are quick to dismiss bullying as kids being kids, but this is totally unacceptable. The effects of bullying are far-reaching and can ruin lives. Bullying inhibits a student's ability to learn and succeed in the classroom. It destroys their sense of self-worth and leaves students feeling excluded from the community of peers. Being on the receiving end of bullying at school can destroy a person's self-confidence for life.

J. Horgan: I want to thank the member for Vancouver-Burrard for his comments. I know he's a tireless worker for tolerance and diversity in his community and across the province, and I certainly support that.

It's a pleasure to stand and respond to the member today. When you're 6 foot 2 and 250 pounds, bullying isn't as big a problem as it is for others, so I have not been the subject of bullying for many, many years. But it is something that I try to eradicate whenever I see it and tolerate it not a whit. It is a privilege and an honour to stand and respond to the member's comments.

I want to talk a little bit about what the previous government put in place during the 1990s to address issues of intolerance and bullying. The member will know the safe school centre in Burnaby, which was established by the previous NDP government in the 1990s. It was put in place to be a clearinghouse for information and new techniques to address bullying and intolerance in our school system. It was fairly successful, and I think that it's... Vigilance never rests, and we have to continue to refine and improve our techniques to address issues in our schools and in our communities when it comes to intolerance, bullying and the like.

We made a good start in the 1990s, and I think that some of our progress there — whether it be the safe school network or *Keeping Schools Safe: A Practical Guide for Principals and Vice-Principals* — was a good start to get us onto the road that I know the member for Vancouver-Burrard would want us to be on. But since that time there have been a number of events that have, I think, taken us backwards.

One that I want to talk about would be the Corren case. I understand it's a human rights complaint that's

before the courts right now. I can't spend a lot of time talking about it, but I have met with Murray Corren. He's a fine, outstanding educator in British Columbia. He and his partner Peter have alleged that the ministry is guilty of discrimination by omission and suppression.

I support that argument wholeheartedly. By omitting and suppressing positive gay and lesbian role models in the curriculum, by default the Ministry of Education and the government of British Columbia — whichever side is in power — are suppressing and doing away with a section of the population's rights. That's wrong. I'm hopeful that the government will recognize that in the short term and will deal with the Corren case expeditiously. That's not been the case to this point in time, and that's unfortunate.

The second component of a step backwards from the 1990s, in terms of addressing bullying and intolerance, would be the reduction in counsellor ratios in our high schools and our elementary schools. If we're reducing front-line workers in the education sector, how can we address the bullying that the member for Vancouver-Burrard so wholeheartedly wants to reduce?

I would argue — and I certainly know that those on this side of the House would argue — that the last thing you'd want to do when you're trying to reduce intolerance and bullying is eliminate positive role models and access points within the school system for people who are under duress.

I know that when the member mentioned the Reena Virk case in my constituency.... The member for Esquimalt-Metchosin, of course, knows this full well. It devastated the south Island in the 1990s and continues to do so to this day — absolutely unacceptable behaviour. The best way to deal with that is to have front-line workers in the school system so people that are being bullied — children, kids, students — have an access point — somewhere to go, a positive role model.

The member for Esquimalt-Metchosin and I have a group in our constituency called Dads in the Hall. This is a group of men — parents — who have banded together and regularly patrol schools in our district, district 62, not intervening unless absolutely required and only with a cell phone. If there's a need for intervention, they will phone a representative authority — whether it be at the school, at the district or the RCMP.

[1100]

Here is a group of men providing role models for kids in our community. They're outside; they're out there; they're active. They carry a deck of cards and a basketball and a hockey stick. If there's an opportunity to intervene where trouble may brew and to try and put kids in a positive direction, they do so. I certainly applaud the intent of Dads in the Hall, as I applaud the intent of this piece of legislation.

Ultimately, I think if we're going to address the issues that the member is so concerned and passionate about, we need to do it with more front-line workers in the school system. We need to put those counsellors back in the schools so they can do their work and try and address these important issues.

With that, I look forward to further debate on that bill when it comes forward.

L. Mayencourt: I'm delighted that the member referenced the safe schools centre. That's a very important resource that we have in British Columbia. I wish each and every one of us could take a half-hour or half a day and spend some time with people that work on that program now at the University College of the Fraser Valley. A wonderful, wonderful resource has been created throughout British Columbia. Unfortunately, it's all located in one spot. Virtually, we can get it to everywhere through the Internet, and all that is very, very important. But I also think it's really important that we pick up the pieces of paper or the binders and that we look at what's inside of them and what the theories are behind it. So I thank him for raising that as an issue.

I want to talk about some of the issues that British Columbians told us were issues when we were travelling. They talked about a code of silence and fears of retribution which perpetuate a vicious cycle of unending harassment. The fact is that kids are afraid to talk about this issue as much as parents are afraid to talk about it, teachers are afraid to talk about it, trustees are afraid to talk about it, and perhaps even legislators are afraid to talk about it.

The Safe Schools Task Force found that there's a strong connection between school safety and the underlying problems that are found within our community. We cannot expect bullying behaviour in our school system to not be reflected at the 7-Eleven, to not be reflected in the workplace.

The Safe Schools Task Force found that while many schools are doing great work, there is an inconsistency of application. A middle school is using one program; an elementary, another; and a high school, a completely different system.

Bullying has been clearly identified as a complex problem with no easy solution. We have to meet the problem head-on, though, and it's time for all of us to work together to do so. We have to think outside of the box. It's no longer a good idea for us to ship manuals to school districts. It's time for us to engage students, parents, children, everyone in our community around the issues of bullying.

The recommendations of the Safe Schools Task Force are a great start to addressing bullying in our school system, but more work needs to be done. It is my hope that in this Legislature we'll have the opportunity to not just talk about racism, sexism and homophobia, but about what it means to a kid, what it means to a parent, what it means to ourselves and our society. Teachers have long lobbied all forms of government on this issue. Parents have come here and spoken to us. Human rights champions have said: "Damn it, you've got to make sure the Human Rights Code applies to kids too."

Kids are crying out in our community. The only people that haven't really got to it are sitting here. We have to get off our duffs. We have to make a difference in kids' lives. We have to pass safe schools legislation,

and we have to protect the kids in our school system and create that change in culture.

Deputy Speaker: I would ask members to be mindful of their language again. Thank you.

J. Brar: I would ask for leave to make a group introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

J. Brar: Today up in the gallery we have over 70 people coming from every part of the province. They are here to listen to the debate about a motion which is going to start pretty shortly. We have members of various religious and social organizations up in the gallery. We have intellectuals. We have young people coming from schools, and we have people coming from Alberta, from Manitoba. I would like to ask the House to make them feel welcome.

[1105]

D. Hayer: I also would like to add my voice to all the members of the Sikh community — all the leaders who are here today visiting for the special debate we're having today. Also, I would like to announce that we'll be having a small reception — the government side will be — at 12:30 for the members in the government caucus room. I'd like to welcome them on behalf of all my colleagues from the government side.

Hon. M. de Jong: I call Motion 49.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 49 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper. Is there unanimous consent?

Leave granted.

Deputy Speaker: The House is also advised that, by agreement, members will have three minutes each to speak on this motion instead of the regular speaking time limits.

Motions on Notice

VAISAKHI FESTIVAL AND PANJ KAKKAAR

J. Brar: I rise to move a motion dedicated to the contributions made by the Sikh community to our country and our province.

[Be it resolved that this House recognize the importance of the anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa, celebrated every year as the festival of Vaisakhi; and the contributions Canadian Sikhs have made to our country and our province; and that this House also recognize the importance of the Panj Kakkaar: the **Kirpan** — a ceremonial sword representing indomitable spirit; the **Kes** — un-

shorn hair, representing a simple life, saintliness and devotion to God; the **Kara** — a steel bangle worn as a sign of eternity of God; the **Kanga** — a wooden comb worn to represent a clean mind and body; and the **Kacha** — short breeches, representing hygienic living.]

It is a great pleasure for me today to bring this motion before the House for debate and, hopefully, even for passage at the end of the debate. The motion that is before the House today is a motion that was originally passed by the Manitoba Legislature on July 13, 1999, with the support of all parties. I will repeat: all parties in that House. It was with that intention or the hope that this motion might also pass this House that I brought it forward at the request of the Sikh community.

The purpose of this motion is to recognize and reaffirm our values of multiculturalism, human rights, equality, and racial and religious tolerance. The story of the Sikh community in Canada goes back to Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, when Sikh regiments passed through Canada on their way to London. By 1903 Sikh immigration to Canada had begun, and between 1903 and 1908 nearly 6,000 Sikhs entered Canada, most of them travelling directly from their villages in Punjab to British Columbia.

In April 1907 Sikh and other Asian immigrants were denied the right to vote in B.C., and laws were passed prohibiting Asians from entering certain professions, serving on juries, obtaining government contracts and buying property in some parts of Vancouver. The worst blow came on May 21, 1913, when the *Komagata Maru* arrived in Vancouver. The ship was kept from landing for two months and then was eventually sent away.

Despite the initial differences between the Sikh immigrants and the local Canadians, it is important to recognize that in the long run, if it had not been for the tolerance and acceptance demonstrated by the local Canadian community, Sikhs would not have been able to contribute all they have been able to. I would like to conclude by saying what we usually hear in the temples. *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh.*

D. Hayer: As a proud member of the Sikh community, it's an honour to speak to and support this motion. Sikhs have been a proud part of British Columbia's history right from its beginning, and this government has been very proactive in supporting the Sikh community and recognizing the contribution of Sikhs in B.C. and in Canada.

[1110]

In fact, the last throne speech and budget speeches spoke directly to the encouragement of immigration and the contributions that ethnic communities have made to the prosperity that this province now enjoys. Our Premier, when he was the mayor of Vancouver, encouraged a Vaisakhi parade celebrating the birth of Khalsa and the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the tenth guru and one who preached the Five Ks, the five sacred symbols of Sikhism.

It is necessary for all baptized Sikhs to wear the Five Ks: the *kirpan*, the *kesh*, the *kara*, the *khanga* and the

kacha — the articles of Sikh faith. As well, when our Premier was the mayor of Vancouver, he helped create Vancouver's famous Punjabi market and establish seniors meetings in the Sunset and Killarney neighbourhoods, along with many other affiliations with the Sikh communities. Our Premier has personally visited the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

As recently as last month our Minister of Labour spent ten days in India — his second trip, by the way — visiting the Golden Temple and meeting with many, many people in communities throughout the Punjab. Under the Premier's leadership, B.C. was the first province in Canada to celebrate and pass a proclamation recognizing the 400 years of Guru Granth Sahib Ji in the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji said that all Sikhs must follow the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib Ji as its living guru. All Sikhs respect and pray the Guru Granth Sahib Ji every time they pray. Guru Granth Sahib Ji has writings of the Sikh gurus and writings from different saints and packets from different religions.

My family members, from both my father's and mother's sides, were baptized Amritdhari Sikhs. All Sikhs, baptized or not, are respected equally in our Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

While I support this motion, I want everyone to know that this is not something new for this province. For decades Sikhs have enjoyed respect and freedom of religion in British Columbia. Our government has from the outset not only respected our ethnic community and immigrants. We have gone to great lengths to encourage and make them all welcome.

Along with the Sikh community, I want to take this moment to recognize all contributions made from all the cultures and communities in British Columbia from Europe, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and other parts of the world.

N. Macdonald: I am pleased to speak in favour of the motion to have this Legislature recognize the contributions Sikhs have made to British Columbia and Canada.

My home community of Golden has a long history of Sikh settlement, with Sikh families arriving as early as the late 1880s to work at Columbia River logging company. The first Sikh temple was on mill property and is said to be the first Sikh temple not only in British Columbia but also in North America. Sikh families also arrived from the mid-20th century on, giving Golden an active Sikh temple and a sizeable Sikh community with a continuing, important role in Golden.

My introduction to Sikh culture came through friends in Golden and the fact that visitors were always made welcome at the Sikh temple and their services in Golden and in the meals that followed. The Sikh community is represented in all parts of Golden society, from local government to cadet leaders to coaches. Sikhs have been our top students, our top athletes and our finest performers. So it's an exceptional history.

My thanks to the member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge for putting forward this motion and providing

an opportunity at this special time of year to recognize the contributions of Sikhs to all of our communities.

J. Nuraney: I, too, rise in support of this motion.

Sikhism is a faith of deep conviction and discipline. I've had the privilege and the opportunity to visit Amritsar in the company our Premier some two years ago when we visited the Golden Temple. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that was an experience I will never forget for the rest of my life. It was a true experience, not only in the sense of a spiritual experience, but to experience the generosity of the community and the deep commitment that this community has towards their faith.

[1115]

The founder of the faith, Guru Nanak Ji, preached the faith as a balance between spiritualism and materialism. Many of the dogmas that are taught are similar to my faith, which also emanates from Sufism. We also believe in the oneness of God and the generosity of human values and meditation. These are the values that are also espoused in the faith of Sikhism, and I truly believe that this faith has a lot to offer our communities.

Vaisakhi is a celebration, not only of the creation of Khalsa but also of spring and of the new beginning. I have had the opportunity and the pleasure to participate on several occasions in the Vaisakhi celebration here in Vancouver. Every time I've been to the *gurdwara*, I have been amazed at the hospitality of the community and, once again, the deep faith and conviction.

The Five Ks — representing *kesh*, *khanga*, *kara*, *kacha* and *kirpan* — are the symbolic symbols of the faith that represents not only the commitment but also the discipline that is required in this faith. The members of the Sikh community in British Columbia over the years have played a very important role in the development of our province, and I take this opportunity to congratulate the community and also pay tribute to their immense contribution in what British Columbia has become today. *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh*.

R. Chouhan: It's a great honour and privilege to rise today and support this motion. I also rise on behalf of the member for Yale-Lillooet to support this motion as well.

Let me start by saying: *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh*. It means "glory, glory to our God and guru." The tenth guru of the Sikh faith, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, sent a message to his followers to get together on April 13, 1699, the first day of the month Vaisakhi. More than 80,000 people responded enthusiastically to hear the guru's divine message. The guru unfolded his plan in a unique manner, the like of which had never occurred in human and spiritual history.

Although it is not possible to describe this historical event in the two-minute time slot, his one divine action transformed the Sikhs to stand against a caste system and exploitation. This was the day when the Sikhs

were given their own identity and self-confidence to stand against the tyranny of Mogul kings. He commanded his followers to defend those who needed help and to treat all human beings as equals.

On this auspicious day of Vaisakhi, Guru Gobind Singh Ji blessed the Sikhs with immortal boon called *amrit* and five *kakkaars*, the five symbols of Sikhism that created the Khalsa. The creation of the Khalsa signified the end of caste and creed and religious differences.

The historic day of Vaisakhi is now celebrated the world over every year on April 13. It is a festival of total sacrifice and total surrender at the feet of the guru. From its very inception the Sikh religion was universal and non-sectarian, and it embraces all humans as equals. It's a religion of bravery to stand against all forms of exploitation. In their daily prayer every Sikh prays for the welfare of everyone.

Since 1897 the Sikhs in Canada have contributed immensely in the social, economic, academic and political fields. Sikhs in Canada have collected and contributed millions of dollars to help the victims of natural disasters and the poor. There was a time when Sikhs were not even allowed to vote, were not allowed to be doctors, engineers or accountants. After 40 years of hard-fought struggle, finally the Sikhs were given the right to vote in 1947.

Since 1947 much progress has been made. Today we have turbaned army and police officers, and turbaned Sikhs are employed in every field. But we have a long way to go to educate the public at large to correct certain stereotypes and raise awareness to understand different cultures and religions.

Today, with the passing of this motion, British Columbians should feel very proud to recognize the creation of Khalsa and the five *kakkaars*. *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh*.

[1120]

M. Polak: It is an honour to rise and speak in support of this motion.

Rare is the initiative that finds support from both sides of this chamber, yet I do not anticipate that this morning's discussions will hear any one of us speaking in opposition. Indeed, the list of those wishing to speak to this motion is lengthy, displaying the broad support enjoyed in the Legislature for the recognition of British Columbia's rich cultural heritage.

Sikhs in British Columbia are not newcomers. Their contributions to the development of our great province stretch back to some of our earliest history. Their struggles were many as they faced discrimination and ignorance in a culture that was not yet mature enough to see the value in embracing diversity. Yet those Sikh pioneers persisted — no question.

They were able to withstand the trials and disappointments they faced by relying on their faith. That faith and commitment has brought us to where we are today. As the 21st century begins, members of the Sikh community are represented in every aspect of the life of British Columbia. In our Legislature the holy scripture of the Sikh faith, Guru Granth Sahib, was recog-

nized and celebrated by the Premier. Today, with the passing of this motion, we acknowledge the Five Ks, sacred symbols that advance the ideals of Sikhism.

Our actions in this chamber today should cause each one of us to reflect on our own values and how they are expressed in our daily lives. The values represented by the Five Ks are universal. They are values that speak to us as individuals, regardless of our own religion or culture. Truly, the ideals advanced by Guru Gobind Singh are crying out to be embraced by a modern culture that often focuses only on commercial or material success.

This motion is largely symbolic and holds no weight of law. Nevertheless, in my view, it would be a shame if we were to pass this motion without a thought to how these ideals could and should be expressed in our daily lives. I urge all members to support this motion and to contemplate its meaning in their own hearts.

C. Puchmayr: It's a great privilege to rise here in support of this motion and in support of another strand of the fibre of the mosaic of Canada as we look at how the different cultures have woven into what Canada is today. I find that the greatest wealth of multiculturalism isn't only people from other cultures coming into our community and our country, but it's what we learn from those cultures.

I found that the greatest excitement in my time as a city councillor and as an activist in the community was speaking and learning about individual cultures of the different communities. I found that the Sikh culture in New Westminster is a very significant one that has a long history and was certainly active in the development, commerce and economies of our city as the city grew from the days of the pioneers to the days we have today.

New Westminster is well served by the Wood Street temple and the many families that have relocated there over the years, and I've found that attending the temple is a very uplifting and very interesting event to attend. Anyone and everyone is well received and well respected as they attend any temple. Just go to a temple and enter, and you will be so well received and so well respected.

Again, I encourage people to learn about other cultures, to go out to other temples and to listen to what people have to say. I think the greatest wealth in any society is the tolerance, the understanding and the learning of those cultures. In closing, I will say: *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh*.

[1125]

J. Yap: It's an opportunity and a privilege to rise and to speak this morning in support of this motion put forward by the member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge. As an immigrant to Canada, I consider this a real opportunity to participate in this debate on an issue that really speaks to our values as Canadians, as British Columbians, and that is to talk about how we can recognize, and continue to recognize, the multicul-

tural fabric of what we call British Columbia and Canada.

I have the privilege of representing a truly multicultural community, Richmond-Steveston. To be able to say that we — all of us, from this side or the other side of the House — live in a truly multicultural, tolerant society where we can as Canadians, as British Columbians, say without any reservation that a measure of our greatness as a people is the fact that we not only tolerate but we celebrate our diversity.... This motion will advance us down this road as well.

We live in a multicultural society. Perhaps many of us who have not had the opportunity to learn more about the diversity among us may still be thinking that we live in a country of two solitudes.

Well, that impression, that perception, of a Canada of just two solitudes is rapidly changing to one where we are a nation of many cultures. Certainly, the Sikh culture, the Sikh religion, as has been mentioned, has made tremendous contributions to our country and to our province.

This motion, I believe, will help us celebrate and recognize the fact that this is an important community that is making an important contribution and that will continue to make an important contribution to the lives of all of us in British Columbia. Whether we celebrate Chinese New Year, Christmas, Hanukkah, Eid or Vaisakhi, we're all British Columbians. Motion 49, I believe, will emphasize this fact, and I support this motion.

I also want to mention in closing that my good friend the member for Kelowna-Lake Country, who will not have an opportunity to speak today, also supports this motion on behalf of his constituents.

H. Bains: It's my honour to stand here and rise in this House to support a motion that will make history in this House. I am privileged to be in this House to speak on this motion.

Like many communities from around the globe who made Canada their home, Sikhs started to come to Canada to start their new lives in this country in the last decade of the 19th century.

Faced with many obstacles and challenges, they struggled, but they continued to push for a better life not only for themselves but for the good of all. As they say in our temples: [The member spoke Punjabi.] Wellness to all.

Despite the challenges, they worked hard and excelled in every aspect of their lives and made contributions to all sectors of the economy. Starting with Ranjit Singh Grewal of Mission and with Moe Sihota, the first Indo-Canadian Sikh elected in any of the legislatures in this country, Sikhs and people of South Asian heritage have been elected in all levels of government in this country. They elected members of Legislatures, Members of Parliament, high-profile ministers in both parliament and in legislatures all across this land — and the Premier of this province.

In business they produced leaders in the forest industry and produced giants such as Herb Doman, Assa Sing Johal, Mayo Singh and many others and helped develop the forest industry that became the envy of the world.

They excelled in the transportation industry, in construction, in the service sector, in high-tech and in the agriculture industry. In labour they produced many leaders, starting with Darshan Singh, a Canadian who was the first organizer in the IWA; Jinny Sims, current president of the BCTF; many presidents and vice-presidents of various unions; presidents of the BCMA. All worked to improve the lives of their workers and to make a difference in their lives.

[1130]

By recognizing the importance of Vaisakhi and the five *kakkaars*, we say to this tireless and proud community: thank you. Thank you for your contributions to Canada. Thank you for your contributions to mankind.

When the government recognizes and understands the values of its diverse communities and society is educated in each other's values and traditions, we strengthen our human rights. Strong human rights affect the lives of each and every one of us. We all know that each person has inherent dignity and values. Human rights recognize our freedom to make choices about our lives and develop our potential as human beings.

Human rights deal with how people relate to each other. They are about how we live together, about our responsibility to each other, respect for each other's rights, helping diverse groups to share the province and the economy. This, will help us do exactly that.

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh.

R. Hawes: It's a pleasure to stand and add my voice to those of my colleagues in supporting this motion. Where I live, in Mission, I'm quite proud of the fact that as an elected member of the local council back in the 1980s, I had some small part in helping to establish the first Sikh temple in Mission, which has operated since 1987 and is a very, very important part of the social fabric of the community in which I live. Last year the electorate in Mission, in the municipal elections, saw fit for the first time to elect an Indo-Canadian to our local council. Tarlok Singh Gidda is now a strong performing councillor within the district council.

I do support and I join the others in supporting the recognition of the Five Ks. As I read the motion, where it says "that this House recognize the importance of the anniversary of the creation of the Khalsa, celebrated every year as the festival of Vaisakhi," it also reminds me of the importance of celebrating a little bit more than that. That is, as my colleague has said, the multicultural nature of our province. I'm extremely proud to live in a country and in a province where we can recognize the traditions and the cultures of others.

It's not that way in other parts of the world. As we all know, there is strife throughout the world on both religious grounds and ethnic grounds that destroys countries and stops people from relating to one another. In this country, regardless of your religious belief, regardless of your ethnic origin, all are celebrated in a homogenous melting pot that builds the fabric of this country. The Sikh community has been an extremely important part of that construction.

I am proud to live in a country and to live in a province where we can take a motion like this and all of us can speak to it freely and where those who have less tolerance are dealt with harshly, where we have laws that prohibit hatred and discrimination. We do not tolerate that kind of behaviour.

I want to congratulate the member for bringing the motion forward. I would like to give my best wishes to the Sikh community in celebration of Vaisakhi and hope to join the celebration in my community. With that, thank you for the opportunity. I know others want to speak.

C. Wyse: It is indeed my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak in support of this motion and to extend a welcome to guests in the gallery who have travelled here to celebrate this event with us. I extend a special greeting to those people back in my home riding of the Cariboo area on this special day.

Vaisakhi is an important cultural and community celebration for the Indo-Canadians amongst us. Vaisakhi also holds religious significance for the Sikh community.

[1135]

In Cariboo South, there is a Sikh temple in 100 Mile House, but with the quirks of the riding boundaries, there are also two temples in Cariboo North that also serve the people of the Williams Lake area in Cariboo South.

These three temples not only provide for the spiritual needs of the Sikh community, but the membership of these temples has provided political leaders and industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, as well as an ethnic and religious radio station in Williams Lake. The Williams Lake Indo-Canadian athletic club sponsors an athletic meet annually that attracts participants from Alberta and all over British Columbia. On this very special occasion of Vaisakhi, I extend my personal best wishes to the members of the Indo-Canadian community.

In closing, I also wish to acknowledge the contribution this group has made to B.C. and to Canada's development, including the 150 Sikhs who mined the Cariboo goldfields in the 1860s. Canada and B.C. are better places as a result of these contributions.

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh.

Hon. M. de Jong: As is the custom, *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh* to our guests here and those watching, I know, across British Columbia. May I, for a moment, offer a special welcome to the president and vice-president, Msrs. Gill and Sidhu, of the Kalgidhar

Darbar Sahib Society from Abbotsford. Professor Gurinder Singh and Dr. Singh, I think, are also here. May I pass along a special hello to all of them.

A special thankyou to the member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge for presenting the motion on the order paper and for the ability to debate it here today.

It occurred to me that some of the members have been there. The village of Anandpur Sahib is a beautiful, peaceful village nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas. It's different than Amritsar. There's a quality about Anandpur Sahib that is very different than other parts of the Punjab.

It was not, I suspect, so quiet in 1699, when that fateful event took place where Guru Gobind Singh and the five beloved ones offered themselves. Out of that arose, really, the Khalsa and the symbols associated with the Khalsa. It was not that quiet, I can assure members, 300 years later in 1999, when I made my first visit there. It was a bustling beehive of activity, as pilgrims from around the world came there, all to celebrate Vaisakhi and the symbols of Sikhism, the symbols of the Khalsa.

Here in this chamber I hope our guests and those watching will understand that today members are speaking as one to celebrate what has become a symbol for freedom from injustice. This building, this institution, in its own way, is a symbol of injustice, and when it comes together, as it is today, to say thank you — to honour pioneers, to honour people who have struggled and brought so much to our province — it is, I would suggest, the finest hour of this institution.

If I might conclude, we say thank you. Thank you for those pioneers who came here, who taught us, who brought their commitment and their hard work and who have made this province the great place that it is. May I say personally, finally, thank you for their hospitality. *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh.*

B. Simpson: My greetings to our guests today. I am very pleased to stand here today and offer my support to the Sikh community in British Columbia by recognizing the importance of one of their most sacred celebrations, Vaisakhi.

[1140]

I immigrated to this country from Scotland when I was ten and went through a difficult time the first year or so as I adjusted to a new culture and got rid of my accent. I had grown up in the slums and housing schemes of Glasgow, and as a result, apparently, I had a very strong accent and used many Scottish slang words. Apparently, I was hard to understand.

Interjections.

B. Simpson: I knew that was coming.

Deputy Speaker: Order, members.

B. Simpson: A group of older boys took it upon themselves to help me get rid of my accent by thrashing me on a regular basis until I started speaking Ca-

nadian. It was a very rough introduction to a country that prided itself on its multiculturalism.

However, my experience pales in comparison to those of immigrants whose accents are amplified by skin colour that's different than the majority and by cultural practices that are not part of Canada's Anglo-Saxon heritage. Therefore, it is vitally important that we do everything in our power as legislators to truly celebrate the diversity of cultures that makes this country so great, and to recognize the valuable contributions that immigrants from cultures other than our founding ones have made to Canada's and British Columbia's progress.

As one of our many so-called visible minority communities, Sikhs have been a target of various attempts to deny them their right to participate fully in Canadian society and to restrict their freedom to adhere to their religious beliefs and symbols. In the early 1900s in British Columbia, they were denied the right to vote and were restricted from participating in professions or on juries and, in some cases, from owning property. This level of discrimination is not ancient history. It was only 16 years ago this month that the RCMP finally allowed turbans to be worn as part of their standard uniform. I remember it well, as the backlash that this created against our Anglo-Saxon view of what constituted a Mountie was severely challenged.

However, I was fortunate and proud to live in a community that accepted with open arms the first turbaned officer, Baltej Singh Dhillon. Constable Dhillon did his first tour of duty in Quesnel. For the most part he was welcomed, and he quickly gained widespread respect as a valuable member of the detachment.

There are still those who continue to resist full acceptance of all that it means to be Sikh in Canada. Just this month the Supreme Court of Canada finally gave a ruling on a five-year-long fight by a Montreal school district that attempted to ban the wearing of *kirpans*, or ceremonial daggers, in school. *Kirpans* are a fundamental part of the Sikh belief system, and for Sikhs, not wearing them is not an option. Fortunately, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that Sikh religious freedom must be protected.

We still have a long way to go as individuals and as a province. I look forward to celebrating Vaisakhi in my home community.

R. Lee: As parliamentary secretary for the Asia-Pacific Initiative, it's my pleasure to stand in this House to support this motion and to welcome the Sikh community in the gallery today. British Columbia is a multicultural province. British Columbians have heritage from every region of the world. The diversity of British Columbians has enriched our lives, our culture and our economy. Many organizations are still getting together to celebrate the lunar new year this month, which is an important time for Asia-Pacific regions such as China, Taiwan, Korea, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, etc.

Yesterday I participated in the St. Patrick's Day parade in downtown Vancouver to celebrate the Celtic heritage. In June we have the European festival in Bur-

naby celebrating the cultures from the Scandinavian and other European countries.

For the last ten years I've been attending the Vaisakhi parade, the annual festival to celebrate the birth of Khalsa. Together with my colleagues from Burnaby, Surrey, Vancouver, Richmond and all over the lower mainland, we enjoy the ceremony as well as the performances and the food, joining many of our friends in the Sikh community.

While we are celebrating Vaisakhi, it's also the time to pay tribute to the contributions of the Sikh community to British Columbia and Canada and to pay respect to their faith in the Sikh religion. For many years the Sikh community has contributed in many aspects to our province by providing necessities in the garment, agriculture, construction and transportation sectors. Many have excelled in their professions, including high-tech, academic and research and development.

[1145]

British Columbia is very fortunate to be blessed with such a vast land of natural resources and such a richness of cultures from all over the world. Let's work together to build this province as the most prosperous region on this continent. I urge every member from both sides of the House to support this motion.

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh.

L. Krog: It is with no small amount of pride and pleasure that I rise this morning to speak in favour of this motion. I have to tell the assembled members and the members of the Sikh community that amongst my constituents are no less an important couple than Moe Sihota's in-laws, Tarlok Parhar and his wife — a very important, and how shall I say, ground-breaking former member of this assembly.

My ancestors came to this island over 150 years ago to an obscure outpost of the British Empire called Fort Victoria. They were welcomed, certainly by all the English settlers who were here at that time. But the province that came to be after that was not such a welcoming community. Members of this assembly passed incredibly racist, horrible laws. This province has a long and horrible history of racism, and for the Sikh community, that culminated in the incident of the *Komagata Maru* nearly 100 years ago.

So when we stand today in this chamber as members — and I want to associate myself with the remarks of all the members who have spoken here this morning — what we are essentially doing is apologizing for what has occurred in this province's history, which was not a part that we really wish to remember, but which we must, I believe, acknowledge this morning.

By the passage, I hope, this morning of this motion we will say openly as a people, as a province on behalf of all the citizens of British Columbia — and for me, particularly on behalf of the constituents of my constituency, Nanaimo — that this province recognizes fully the incredible contribution of the Sikh community to this province, that it recognizes fully the diversity of our province, the importance of tolerance and acceptance of all peoples.

So this morning what we really do is say thank you to all of those who have come this morning to witness this event. Thank you to all of the British Columbians who elected us here to be able to do this, this morning, to do the right thing on behalf of the Sikh community in this province, and to recognize once and for all that the greatness of this province comes from its diversity, from its peoples and from those in the Sikh community who have contributed so long and hard to that diversity.

K. Krueger: I wish to start by welcoming our Sikh guests in the galleries. It's wonderful to have you with us.

I also wish, Madam Speaker, to mention that there's an anomaly in this House that the Speaker is not allowed to speak except when he or she tells a member whether or not to speak. In your particular situation, I would like to say, on your behalf, that the member for Kelowna-Mission wishes the Sikh community all the best in — as she has said — our Vaisakhi celebration.

To me, the Sikh faith is one of the world's great faiths, which adds to the rich mosaic of British Columbians' lives. Like the other great faiths, including the Christian faith and Muslim, Hinduism, Buddhism and others, it teaches respect, kindness, generosity and the advancement of goodness and deprecates violence. I've been welcomed as a guest in Sikh temples many times. I love the atmosphere and the way that they speak and think about other people. We are noted and privileged in British Columbia to thrive in such a rich mosaic of peoples and faiths, in peace and prosperity. I'm very pleased to support this motion.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

[1150]

H. Lali: In the history of India, for over a thousand years the main communities — the Hindus and the Muslims — were at war with each other. During that time, a Sufism movement was developed on the Muslim side, and a Bhakti movement on the Hindu side, and it was a peaceful attempt to try to synchronize the two communities into one.

Of course, in the 15th century Guru Nanak, the first guru of Sikhism, actually attempted to bring both communities together, and that's how Sikhism started. By the time of the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh.... On Vaisakhi Day in 1699 he created the Khalsa. Since there was so much persecution of the Sikhs going on, he decided to create an army called the Khalsa, which meant "the brotherhood of the pure." The salutation he gave them was *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh*, which meant that the Khalsa belongs to the guru, so may the victory also belong to the great guru.

The number five in Sikhism is a very, very important number. The word Punjab, the state where all Sikhs come from, means land of the five waters. Panchayat, which is the council of five at the village level of local government that was created, started in the Punjab. *Punjabpayare:* on the Khalsa day, the guru

Gobind Singh instituted the institution of the five *payare*, again, which was to make decisions on behalf of the communities. *Panji Kahkar:* the hon. member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge already talked about that, again, with the number five giving the Sikhs their separate identity. In north India there's a belief that ... [The member spoke Punjabi] ... God exists where there's a congregation of five people, and that's where this has come from.

Sikhs are all over the world. Guru Gobind Singh said... [The member spoke Punjabi.] ... which means: "In every part of the world, wherever there's a tree, my Sikhs will be underneath that tree, flourishing amongst the populations."

Sikhs have come to Canada, of course. We've heard the history from many people here in terms of the struggle that they have to go through, but I must say that when I was a member of the last NDP government, the crowning achievement for us in terms of the Sikh community was bringing Punjabi into the schools on the same level as English, French, Spanish and other languages that had already been established from generations before.

Sikhs are very, very proud to have come to Canada and be a part of the social fabric here, as you see in the galleries. It's full of Sikhs here today who are proud of this moment. It's a great day for Sikhs in terms of the tolerance that is shown by Canadian society and British Columbia society, especially since the history that had gone on under *Komagata Maru* and around that time.

I stand here in full support of this motion, and I know that all members of this House will support passing this motion. It's a historic day. We should all be proud of this in terms of the multicultural community that we have here. Before I sit down I would like to give my salutation, the Sikh salutation, to everybody who is here and people who are listening, and that is: *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, waheguru ji ki Fateh.*

J. McIntyre: I'm very grateful for the opportunity today to add my voice to our colleagues in support of this motion. We have a very strong and rich Sikh community in Squamish, in my riding, and a number of the members of that community were early founders of the village and worked in the mills and in the railway and have really contributed magnificently to that community.

I want to actually say today to the House that one of the very distinct pleasures in my decision to run for office was to meet the people and learn so much from the context and now the friendships I've made with the Sikh community in Squamish. I was received so warmly by members of the temple, and all the visits I've had to the temple, the participation in the Vaisakhi ceremony last year, were just wonderful experiences. It's enriched my life personally, and the things I've learned about Sikhism, about their emphasis on universality, are wonderful lessons that I think many of us in society can learn from. I feel so tremendously enriched, so I really wanted to congratulate, welcome the visitors and say how proud I am to live in a province

that has become such a model of cultural diversity around the world.

So, many thanks, and as I say, I really express welcome. I'm glad this is a wonderful day in the House that we can be celebrating Sikhism.

[1155]

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: The motion carried unanimously.

[Applause.]

Hon. M. de Jong moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

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