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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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MONDAY, MAY 1, 2006

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

Prayers.

Orders of the Day

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

Private Members' Statements

INCOMES POLICY

R. Fleming: I appreciate the opportunity to speak a little bit this morning about incomes in B.C. and in particular about the lowest-paid workers in our economy. I note that it is May 1, and in many parts of the world it is celebrated as we celebrate Labour Day in British Columbia.

It is a sad and alarming fact that the poorest workers in our province are falling further and further behind. This is occurring even as unemployment rates are now lower in B.C. and in most of North America than they have been in the past two or three decades. Living conditions for the working poor in B.C. deteriorate, even as the economy grows at what most would describe as a reasonable rate. This is a situation that is of concern to everyone, and one that demands the attention of the province's business and labour leaders, educators, community planners and all of us here who sit in this House as legislators.

The concern about the government's minimum-wage policies and low-paid workers in our province is linked to the attention that this side of the House gives to the appalling growth in child poverty in recent years. British Columbia has slipped from its 2001 position of fourth worst, if you will, in the incidence of child poverty to tenth in 2005 — the highest rate of child poverty in all of Canada.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

At our province's food banks today, 36 percent of food recipients are children. The fact is that many — most, in fact — of B.C.'s children living in poverty grow up in families with one parent working, sometimes both. Six weeks ago the Dieticians of Canada and the Community Nutritionists Council of B.C. issued a report entitled *Little Money for Food — The Reality for Some B.C. Families*, which outlined the growing concern of B.C.'s dietitians that low wages are contributing to a situation where "there is simply not enough money to provide healthy food for many families in the province."

[1005]

We have a growing poverty problem in our midst, one that government and society must work with conviction to ameliorate. The latest figures from Statistics Canada confirm that in larger B.C. communities, the

current minimum wage reduces even those who work full-time to life below the poverty line. B.C. has the second-highest incidence of minimum-wage earners — 6.2 percent of our workforce, second only to Newfoundland and much higher than the 0.9 percent of Albertans who make do with the minimum wage. This is not a good thing. These earners have the lowest purchasing power in our economy. They do not stimulate economic growth, by and large, because of low consumption. Of particular concern to policy-makers is that B.C.'s share of minimum-wage earners is growing — up 2 percent since 1999.

It's time that the government review the minimum wage, and specifically that this review include an objective look at the so-called training wage that in reality makes up a second tier of reduced minimum wage that is open to abuse and an unlevel playing field between socially responsible employers and, mostly, the fast-food giants that primarily take advantage of this policy.

B.C.'s minimum wage was cut by \$2 an hour as one of the first 90-day measures the government took in 2001. This was controversial legislation then and part of a new policy turn that also returned the province to deficit for the next three fiscal years.

Who earns the minimum wage in B.C.? More people than one might think. Over 104,000 workers in British Columbia's workforce of 1.67 million employees earned the minimum wage in 2004. Two-thirds of these workers are women. Most of them, not surprisingly, are young people under the age of 24. You know, if the 1976 minimum wage in British Columbia would have kept pace with inflation, it would be \$10.36 per hour today. But the reality is that the \$8 minimum wage has been reduced to \$6 per hour for some new workers, mostly young people who aren't necessarily in their first job.

These young workers have additional pressures to face. Housing costs are rising. The cost of public post-secondary education has doubled under this government over the past five years. Student grants have been reduced. Student debt has dramatically risen. While younger workers today are better educated than their parents' generation 30 years ago, they are paid on average 25 percent less in inflation-adjusted currency. Lower pay combined with B.C.'s housing prices will result in kids living with their parents longer, and this will have nothing, really, at all to do with parents feeding them cheese.

The real risk and danger is that hope and opportunity are further diminished for those at the bottom struggling to get ahead. This is not the kind of socially inclusive society that modern governments should be promoting. In fact, it is a recipe for frustration and despair. One can readily find the worst kind of despair on the streets of B.C.'s largest communities today. A growing number of the homeless population, which has doubled since 2001 in many of our towns and cities, are employed and part of the working poor.

In the nearly six years since the reduction in the minimum wage, the government has not once re-

viewed its action on the minimum wage in general through a commission or a panel. Let's contrast this with the Ontario government. Premier McGuinty's government has raised the minimum wage three times since it was elected in 2004. The previous Conservative government had frozen the minimum wage for nine years, a record apparently that our Premier may be trying to match.

It's time for such a review. If members on the government side don't want to take my word for it, why don't they listen to the employers and the people who lobbied them in the first place to bring in this regressive policy? Even Ian Toastenson, the president and CEO of the B.C. Restaurant and Foodservices Association — who did lobby mightily and donated heavily to the governing party to introduce the training wage — now admits five years on that most of his members don't use it and, in an interview he recently gave, that it, "may have outlived its purpose." In fact, he suggests the training wage never really worked at all.

There are other business leaders who also question the government's training wage. The past president of the Greater Victoria Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Jim Tighe, says he thought it "a strange move" when the government implemented the lower wage. In surveys of membership in his association, none of them have reported using the training wage. Nevertheless, while the vast majority of small businesses and restaurants do not use the training wage, many fast-food chains do, including McDonald's, Burger King and Dairy Queen.

Is this who the government...?

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, member.

[1010]

L. Mayencourt: I want to thank the member very much for bringing forward this important topic of discussion. I think that he has spent a lot of time working in municipal government and understands a lot about the communities in which he lives. I hope that I can represent my communities as well.

I'm interested in the topic that he has raised. I think it is important, but I want to start with just a couple of comments that he sort of put in right at the very.... Well, he put some comments in at the beginning and then some comments in at the end, which were kind of confusing to me.

First he talks about the need for the minimum wage to be raised. That has been something that we have discussed in government. It's also been something that we have discussed in this chamber with members of the opposition as well as with government members. It is something that I think there's some room for us to talk about.

The second thing that he raises — and it is a confusing point to me — is that he details over and over again that nobody uses the \$6 training wage and nobody uses the \$8 minimum wage. He says there are fast-food outlets that do that, but I know for a fact that companies like A&W are paying people \$12 to start. That's nowhere near the minimum wage. It's actually 50 per-

cent higher than the minimum wage. I think that what we see in British Columbia today is that the actual wage that people start off their jobs in is much, much higher than \$8 per hour.

I do think that government has a role in setting minimum wages, and I think we certainly can discuss that with members. But I would urge that member and members on the other side and perhaps members on this side who feel strongly about it: don't just make a motion about it. Don't just make a speech about it. If you've got something that you would like to change, come forward with a private member's bill. Come forward and say: "You know, I think we should be doing something."

It's good for us to debate. It's good for us to talk. It's also good for us to take some decisive action. So if that's an issue for the member, I would suggest that this is one vehicle that would be very, very productive and would be helpful to his cause and helpful to the people who he says he's trying to serve here.

I think all of us recognize that in British Columbia, we have an extraordinary situation right now. We've got over two million people now, over half of our population, actually working. They are working in high-paying, well-paying jobs that serve families and make sure that people can afford their housing, make sure that people can afford to have a car, to pay their bills and to live a good life in British Columbia. I'm grateful for that, and I know that's something that has happened as a result of some very hard work by members of the government and some very hard work by members of our public service who have worked hard to ensure that we get through red tape, that we get to the point where we can say to people: "Yes, we can do business with you. Yes, you can do business in British Columbia."

Right now if you look across British Columbia, you'll find that not only are people looking for jobs, but you will find jobs looking for people. I go all around this province. I was up in Prince George just the other day. Everywhere I looked: "Help wanted" signs. Those people who are being hired in those jobs are not being hired at minimum wage. They are being hired at wages higher than that, because the market demands that.

I support the notion in general that government should have some involvement in setting minimum wages, but I think that in this red-hot economy it's kind of redundant, because right now we're paying higher wages than ever before. I think that's a good thing in British Columbia.

I also think that we have a great opportunity as private members, as that member is, to be able to put your money where your mouth is. Stand up and introduce a piece of legislation, say what you really mean and back it up, and go and campaign across this province to see that it builds support and put the bill forward. Who knows? You might have the opportunity to see that bill adopted or passed by government. I think it's important that we continue the debate, but there's more to it than talk. There has to be some action as well.

[1015]

R. Fleming: I appreciate the comments of the member for Vancouver-Burrard. I'm pleased to hear that he thinks the minimum wage should be looked at, because his government has given no indication that they share that opinion today.

In fact, I keep going back to a quote from 1999 from the Premier, which I think set the table for the shock and disappointment when the minimum wage was rolled back by \$2 an hour. The Premier was very clear and said: "Let me say on the record to you that I acknowledge the need for a minimum wage. We have no plan to lower the minimum wage, and we never have. The minimum wage is the minimum wage. We have no intention of reducing the minimum wage." Yet he did that in his first 90 days in office.

Interjection.

R. Fleming: Look, the member has suggested a private member's bill. That may be one way to go about this. I think the best, most responsible practice that governments have when reviewing the minimum wage is to get it out of Legislature, quite frankly, to set up something like a low-pay commission that would include business, economists, labour. The member has pointed out that in his experience in his constituency, the training wage isn't being used during this economic time. What better reason than to repeal that offensive \$6-an-hour training wage if the takeup rate is so low?

But you know what? In his own riding, in a newspaper article recently: "While the vast majority of small businesses and restaurants do not use the training wage, again, the fast-food giants do." This government's policy, in a sense, has been all about helping them, all about the profit margins of burger-and-French-fries giants apparently, because they're the main beneficiary as the evidence suggests. It should be noted that some franchise or corporate change reject this government's policy categorically. Starbucks, for example, pays its workers above minimum wage and provides extended benefits.

I think we've got to go back, though, to the rationale originally. The government thought this would help employ more young people, but the fact is that the training wage has not improved employment for young people. Compare the rate of youth unemployment to mature workers today to 2001-2002 when it was introduced, and you'll find that the numbers have not changed at all.

The youth unemployment rate increased at the same rate as 25-to-44-year-olds when it was going up — i.e., it had no short-term impact. Since 2002 the unemployment rate for youth has declined actually at a slower rate than that for 25-to-44-year-olds — again, no long-term positive impact.

I think when governments write policies and implement them in legislation, they owe it to themselves to review the impact of them. We've seen that basically the training wage has been taken up and exploited by no one other than large multinational fast-food chains.

Small business rejects it. They think it creates an unlevel playing field. It's time for the government to scrap this second tier of the minimum wage.

B.C. CREDIT RATING UPGRADE

R. Sultan: One month ago the international credit rating agency Standard and Poor's boosted British Columbia's credit rating to AA+ from AA, recognizing the province's strong fiscal management, low debt and robust economy.

Standard and Poor's also said its rating upgrade reflected "significantly improved transparency in the province's budgetary planning and reporting." In other words, part of their report card was based on the depth and clarity not simply of the substance but also the transparency of our report card.

At the time the Finance Minister observed: "The upgrade also reflects B.C.'s low and declining net taxpayer-supported debt burden, larger than expected budget surpluses and the robust performance of British Columbia's economy in the prior year despite strong headwinds from a number of challenges."

This is the second time in 18 months that S&P has boosted the province's credit rating. The minister basked in S&P's statement of confidence in the direction we're heading, but she also reminded us we can't be complacent. "We must continue to be prudent with B.C.'s finances and work to keep our economy strong," she said.

Standard & Poor's favourable report cards are a departure from the failing grades they handed out in a previous era. They downgraded B.C.'s credit rating twice, once in 1997 and again in 1999. However, in 2001 the government set out a three-year plan to balance the budget and revitalize B.C.'s economy. Obviously impressed by this government's ability to deliver what it projected fiscally, S&P upgraded the credit rating to AA from AA- in November of '04 and a further upgrade of a month ago to AA+. This confirmed our position as a fiscal leader among Canadian provinces second only to Alberta and the Dominion government itself.

[1020]

Not so long ago in Canada, many governments said: "Who cares? Credit, schmedit. Governments never go broke." I heard that frequently at a major commercial bank as we shovelled country loans off the back of a truck. From government's point of view, if spending is a little bit on the heavy side this year, it will set the stage for higher revenues later on, and all will be balanced eventually. The fact that the balancing burden was sliding off our shoulders onto the backs of our grandchildren was seldom mentioned. It took commercial lending rates of about 20 percent and defaults on international government debts to restore sobriety. That was 25 years ago.

Today we pay more attention to government balance sheets, and so do credit rating agencies. Aside from the comforting optics, does moving from AA- to AA+ really matter? Well, it does actually, in several ways.

First, consider the cash savings. In the fall of '01, shortly after the change of government, B.C. bonds yielded nine basis points more than Ontario's in the ten-year and 30-year maturity range. We had to pay more than Ontario paid to borrow money. Today the tables are reversed. B.C. 30-year maturities trade 14 basis points lower than Ontario's — an approximate 19 basis-point improvement, almost one-fifth of a percentage point.

Does a fifth of a percentage point really matter? Well, it certainly does if you have almost \$35 billion of provincial debt outstanding, as we do. If, speaking hypothetically, you had to roll over that provincial debt all at once, a fifth of 1 percent saving would be getting close to \$100 million a year. That's a \$100 million a year extra that you could spend on training more nurses and doctors, creating better schools and universities, improving public safety or even giving it back to the taxpayers in a tax cut.

Aside from the cash aspects, there's a second in many ways more pervasive element. Recent economic research on international comparisons has focused on balance sheet aspects of individual countries. For example, I follow the work reported by the National Bureau of Economic Research in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Superior credit ratings are associated with a lower cost of capital generally. A lower cost of capital is, in turn, frequently associated with financial liberalization of financial markets and openness to foreign trade and investment and the protection of property rights. When all of these elements work together, research — and in this case, it happened to be done by two individuals named Bekaert and Harvey, for example — suggests that such elements of financial liberalization can improve long-run growth prospects in the economy by as much as one-third. Just think of it — a one-third boost in your growth rate.

With that type of economic growth come higher government revenues, the capacity to fund superior government services — all of which contribute to the fabric of a healthy, wealthy and wise population. Throw in social justice and enlightened environmental management, and you're making serious progress on great goals for your society — all because of that credit report. No, no, no. I just threw that in to see if you were paying attention.

But the point is unassailable. Good fiscal management, keeping expenditures in line with revenues, cutting taxes, having a strong balance sheet and reporting fully, faithfully and transparently are all good things. They encourage economic growth, jobs and incomes. Let us applaud the government's success in achieving that.

R. Fleming: Let me thank the member from West Vancouver for bringing some life to this topic of frequent government and public affairs bureau press releases and sharing his learned perspective with us this morning.

Listen. Canada and B.C. are among the safest jurisdictions in the world to invest. For many decades this has been the case. We are, and we have been, among an

elite club of nations in this regard. Just as we are stable and mature markets, Canada and B.C. do not offer aggressive rates of return, but they do offer safe, secure, properly regulated and relatively low-risk investments for capital.

[1025]

As the member said at least a couple of times, this April, B.C.'s credit rating with Moody's and S&P improved from AA to AA+. While the difference in terms of borrowing advantage and investor attractiveness is slight because you're already at the top of the pack, there are some benefits that the taxpayers may see. It will be interesting, actually, to see how this will affect Partnerships B.C. or B.C. Ferries and private sector organizations that prescribe private borrowing as a cure-all for public sector infrastructure projects.

The fact that public debt is already significantly cheaper to service only reinforces the significant advantage that public sector borrowing enjoys over the private capital markets for large projects. This side of the House is going to be very keen, indeed, to see if the government's almost ideological appetite for P3 financing is in any way dampened by the increase to the public sector advantage in this regard. Perhaps we'll see a move towards more conventional procurement practices and design-build agreements that are actually transparent, where the growing and costly premiums for private finance are avoided. We will wait.

The new move to exclude more government services designated as joint special projects that was announced in a miscellaneous bill on Thursday afternoon, as we were all ready to head home, would suggest otherwise. It would suggest that the government is trying to remove from the purview of freedom-of-information disclosure.... It would suggest that the government would like to hide from the public the professed benefits of "risk-sharing" with the private partners by deeming it to be commercial propriety. This is completely at odds with emerging practices in other parts of the world — Australia, for example, in 2005 where the Auditor General investigated P3 transportation projects and concluded that the reasons for obscuring transparency and scrutiny of deals worth of billions of dollars were completely unjustified.

Deputy Speaker: Excuse me, member. You can't talk about legislation that's before the House.

R. Fleming: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me return to the credit ratings. Interestingly, the province of B.C. didn't see fit to issue a press release in February of this year when Standard and Poor's announced it had lowered long-term issuer credit and senior unsecured debt ratings on the Municipal Finance Authority of B.C. The MFA's credit rating was downgraded from AAA to AA+ — the reason given: increased debt, mainly incurred in expensive public-private partnerships, including the overbudget Golden Ears Bridge and the RAV Canada line, which exposes local government to substantial risks from aggressive ridership targets.

These are projects that heavily involved the province, to which Partnerships B.C. was inserted as the agreement adviser and lead. It would appear that part of the province's gain in terms of its credit rating upgrade has been at the expense of local government.

R. Sultan: Thank you for the response.

I would like to conclude my remarks by describing a recent real-life western Canadian case history. To protect the innocent, I'm not going to name the particular province, but you might hazard a guess.

This is a province with a government very proud of its 2006 fiscal plan and budget. Its motif is captured in the opening statement, which declares: "Budget 2006 is our government's seventh straight balanced budget under balanced-budget legislation."

[Applause.]

R. Sultan: If I may add my own commentary, I would agree that that is impressive, and I'm delighted to hear the applause. But point two: spending was \$225 million over budget in this anonymous province last year. Oops. Thirdly, the government would have been in the red if it had not received unexpectedly large transfer payments from Ottawa.

Fourthly, it recorded a surplus on its books of \$3 million but only after topping up its revenues with a further \$86 million drawn from what they call a rainy-day fund — sort of a sock with extra cash in it when you need it in a hurry. The remaining balance in the rainy-day fund is \$414 million — substantial, but it appears this may have been financed through prior years' borrowings. Hmm.

With all of that, the government is very proud that it is also paying \$110 million into its debt retirement fund under the existing balanced-budget legislation.

Finally, there's mention of \$3.8 billion — with a "b" — of unfunded public sector pension liabilities equal to 10 percent of the province's GDP.

[1030]

So now you have the picture: in the black for seven years — certainly worthy of applause — dipping into the rainy-day fund, paying into the debt retirement fund; actual spending a little bit off course; huge unfunded liabilities. Frankly, it's not really clear, to me at least, exactly what's going on, but some of us would have our suspicions.

Will S&P raise the credit rating of this province, now in its seventh straight year of balanced budgets, as declared? Don't hold your breath. B.C.'s credit rating upgrade was not based on such last-minute transferring back and forth between accounting entities. It was based on reality.

That's why Standard and Poor's report card on the transparency of B.C.'s report card, our budget and plan, was almost as important as the actual entries in the budget and plan. Thank goodness we live in British Columbia.

SO WE DON'T FORGET — TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST

K. Whitted: Last week members of this Legislature gathered together to remember the Holocaust. An ongoing theme from all of the speakers was that we must never be allowed to forget the enormity of the events of the Holocaust and that we all share responsibility to ensure that our children and grandchildren will learn lessons from the Holocaust.

The role of our schools and curriculum is undoubtedly an essential element of this discussion. Many years ago, while serving on a committee to develop curriculum on the Holocaust, I was afforded an opportunity to attend an extensive workshop in Boston about a project known as Facing History and Ourselves.

"Facing History and Ourselves was one of the most deeply affecting experiences of my life." That is a quote from a student, actually actor Matt Damon. As an educator, I would agree with him. Facing History and Ourselves is a curriculum designed to teach students to look beyond the facts. As the name suggests, it is a curriculum that works to engage students of diverse backgrounds in citizenship education.

It is based on several beliefs — among them that education in a democracy is, in fact, an apprenticeship in liberty. Facing History helps students find meaning in the past and recognize the need for participation and responsible decision-making. Students, it believes, must know not only the triumphs of history but also the failures, the tragedies and the humiliations.

Facing History believes that students must be trusted to examine history in all of its complexities, including its legacies of prejudice and discrimination, resilience and courage. The trust encourages young people to develop a voice among their peer culture as well as the critical discussions and debates of their community and nations.

It believes that by studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of collective violence, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices that confront them in their own lives. It is also based on the idea that history and curriculum is most effective when it corresponds to students' cognitive and moral development.

Therefore, this curriculum is built around the idea that adolescence is a time of major development transition, when young people are looking for guidance to develop their abstract reasoning and moral judgments. Finally, it's based on the belief that there is a moral component to civic education and that there are moral roots that people should learn to confront.

[1035]

How does this apply to the British Columbia curriculum? Obviously, in terms of teaching events like the Holocaust, it can also be applied to events such as residential schools, to events such as the *Komagata Maru*. It can be applied to issues such as the head tax that confronted our Chinese immigrants. It can be applied to discussion of issues around gays and lesbians.

A recent aspect of curriculum that was in the news was the controversy over the Muslim cartoons. That was also an ideal kind of topic that would fit very well into this kind of approach to curriculum, where it asks the questions: what is the line between freedom of speech and provocation? When, if ever, does a cartoon become a form of hate? How do we articulate political perspective while respecting diverse religious beliefs? Those are the kinds of questions that this curriculum demands of students.

I would like to just conclude with a quote from a former Facing History teacher in which he or she said: "I see kids come to life in the room. I see a genuine engagement, and I think the intensity happens because the content is so striking and the curriculum is so relevant to kids' lives."

R. Chouhan: I, too, rise to speak about the Holocaust and the loss of millions of lives just because Nazis deemed Jews inferior. The Holocaust was the murder of approximately six million people by the Nazis and their collaborators. This was an act of evil to be condemned over and over again. We must continue to teach ourselves and our students about this black mark on our collective history, and we must also learn a lesson to fight against racism, homophobia and all forms of discrimination.

It's important to include in the curriculum that in addition to Jews, many others also fell victim to the Nazis regime for political, social and racial reasons. Those who suffered from mental or physical handicaps were killed under a euthanasia program, and others were jailed because they were homosexuals or communists. Large numbers of people of Roma and Sinti were killed. By one account, up to 500,000 people were murdered just because they were Roma and Sinti. It's important that our students learn about these historical events.

There are other historical events similar to the Holocaust. Millions of people have been murdered in the world because of their religious, ethnic or social backgrounds. Approximately 400,000 women and girls were kidnapped by the Imperial Japanese Army from Korea, the Philippines, China, Burma, Indonesia and other Japanese-occupied countries. They were forced to serve as sex slaves in brothels sanctioned and run by the Japanese army. Less than 30 percent of them survived the war. Young girls were sent to their dining halls to serve the Imperial Japanese Army. The dining hall was no restaurant or cafeteria. It was a comfort station housing dozens of young, unmarried girls who were forced to service up to 29 men on a daily basis.

Under the murderous policy known as the Final Solution, the Nazis held the belief that getting rid of all Jews would be beneficial to the German people. To make this world a better place, it's important that we do everything — everything — to remind ourselves of these atrocities and learn a lesson or two from these horrible experiences.

In remembering the Holocaust and its victims around the world, much has been done in our quest for world peace, but lots more could be done. We must

fight against racism the moment it appears. We must treat every person as equal. We must strive for a democratic, just and tolerant society where everyone's worth is respected regardless of their race, religion, gender or skin colour.

[1040]

K. Whittred: I thank the member opposite for his remarks and for citing yet more examples of how this particular approach to curriculum that I have described today could be used. There is really no end of topics that it is suited for.

How do we in this chamber try to live up to our end of our obligation, which we heard the day that we remembered the Holocaust? How do we try to make sure that our children and grandchildren will in fact know about not only the Holocaust but the other examples of evil that have been mentioned in the House here today?

Well, I think there are some fairly simple things we can do. We can go back and work within the institutions where we have, perhaps, a presence or an influence. Those members in the House who have children in school can ask their PACs: "Where in our curriculum do we talk about these things? Where in this school do we have access for our children to discuss these matters?" We can ask our ministry: "Where in the curriculum does it mention the Holocaust?"

This is something that I worked on, as I said, years and years ago, and I have to share with you that I am still disappointed. The only place that it appears in the provincial curriculum is in history 12, which is in fact studied by a relatively few number of students. I have to confess to you disappointment that it was not a more major part, particularly of the new civics 11 curriculum. But those are still areas where perhaps if we all speak out, we can make some changes.

I've also pointed out where a curriculum that I've described today.... That is an approach to curriculum. Teachers do have the ability to be creative in their classrooms as they work with other topics, and I think that those could certainly be addressed. We can talk to other educators. We can ask: "How are you doing this? What is being done in your school?"

There are any number of things that we can do. An encouraging thing, as I looked at this after being away from it for a number of years, is that there really is no shortage of resources. That's one thing the Internet has given us. There is an abundance of resources.

I am very pleased that the Holocaust symposium — which has been going for a number of years, certainly in Vancouver and Victoria — continues. I know that it's widely attended by many, many students, and I think we are seeing evidence that the institutions, particularly from the various organizations, are not letting it disappear.

RURAL EDUCATION

C. Trevena: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to give the House some snapshots — snapshots of schools in my con-

stituency and of lives being lived now, as we sit in the House. It's a bright, cold morning, and there's a bowl of fruit and yogurt on the desk of the grade three-four classroom in Zeballos Elementary-Secondary School. The teachers there pride themselves that there is a culture within the school where students are not embarrassed to say they are hungry, and many of them do come to school hungry.

It's a small school, 75 registered students from K-to-12, so people know who is hungry, who may not have had breakfast and who hasn't brought a lunch. One of the students told me that 22 people live in her home. She knows that is not healthy, is not safe, and it is impossible for her to study. Another student has shunted back and forth from Campbell River to Zeballos because his mother hasn't anywhere to live — shunted back and forth between different schools.

The school day has just started, and we're sitting in the art room. The principal daily holds a special morning class for those teenagers whose reading level is about grade one or two. The kids drift in, and I'm introduced. They've had civics classes through the federal and the previous provincial election, and they have been told that if they get in touch with their MLA or their MP, their concerns will be heard. I would like to read to the House some of those concerns.

I am in a class with grade nine to 12 with only one teacher, and it's hard for her to teach four different grades, because every single student is in a different spot in their work. It's not only hard for the teacher, but it's hard for the students also.

[1045]

I was in grade eight last year, and there were lots of teachers, so we got taught proper lessons, but this year there is only one teacher for four grades. Therefore, we have to do the module system, and we don't get all the help we need to pass our courses because every time she tries to do a lesson, the grade level is either too high or too low for most people in our class. I'm just assuming that the same thing is happening in other schools.

I one day hope to go to university. Without your help, that can't come true. That's all I wanted to say. Good-bye.

Another student wrote:

I'm a student at Zeballos Elementary-Secondary School. I'm in grade ten. We did the student votes, and I voted for you. I voted for you because we need more doctors in Zeballos. We only have one doctor every two weeks, and it's usually not the same person.

Child care is a concern of mine, because I'm a mother that's in school. It's hard for me to get reliable day care for my son. What I really want is day care in our town that takes toddlers, and money for me to pay for it.

It's hard for the kids at Zeballos Elementary-Secondary School. Zeballos, for those members who don't know its location, is on the west coast of Vancouver Island, accessible off Highway 19 by a 45-kilometre active logging road. Even those who live there say it's remote.

Many at the school are first nations living either on the reserve just outside the village or on another reserve a further half-hour down that logging road. The teachers there and the teachers assistants are extraordi-

narily dedicated. They teach, as one of the students indicated, split classes. The grade nine-to-12 teacher tries to coordinate 23 subjects. She teaches five math classes at once and has been attempting to teach chemistry 12 without a lab.

This year there are 19 students in her classroom. She's got to prepare them for provincial exams, for their graduation and for life. The classroom itself is a portable in poor condition. The bathrooms don't work, and some people with allergies find it very difficult to work in the room.

I go back into the main building, and I find the principal working in the corridor. She's sitting on a chair outside her own office with papers on her lap. One of the two students who may graduate this year is working in the principal's office on her grade 12 English. It's the only place quiet enough to study. The student comes out into the corridor to ask the principal to check some of her work and bustles back into the office to carry on. That student hopes to enter the RCMP on graduation.

All of the rooms in the school are being used — the classrooms with their split classes and noisy kids; teachers assistants with the special needs students in more intimate spaces, including in a teachers' break room — 75 students, but the school is overcrowded. The principal tells me they haven't reached the number that they need to get more space.

About an hour and a half away is Woss Lake Elementary School. The contrast is startling. That school is a comparatively new building designed for a couple of hundred students. It's light and it's airy. Walking through the corridors I heard the music class happening, and it wasn't bad xylophone.

Woss is a former logging camp just off Highway 19 in the Nimpkish Valley. It's a community which is trying to survive the changes in the logging industry. There are 23 youngsters at the school this year. Next year there will be 18. The school doesn't have its own principal. Instead, to try to maintain teaching numbers, the principal is split three ways — part time at Woss, part time at Sunset Elementary in Port McNeill and part time in Sointula. The school does try to get grade sevens together, when they can, for field trips and events. They will be coming to the House next month.

The school board for school district 85 knows that keeping a school is integral in keeping a community alive. Everyone knows that busing kindergarten-aged children to Port McNeill is not an option.

These schools are very different, but in many ways they are facing the same problems — problems of a funding formula for education which doesn't reflect realities; problems of trying to make sure every child and young person in British Columbia gets a quality education; problems of communities trying to stay alive.

I've given snapshots. I've given the House some snapshots of a couple of rural schools in my constituency — schools with hard-working, caring staff; schools that want to give all their kids educational opportunities; schools that can't easily organize friendly

softball tournaments or basketball games with their neighbouring schools because there are no neighbouring schools — snapshots which I hope will give the House a sense of what rural education is all about.

[1050]

B. Lekstrom: I would like to thank the member for North Island for talking about rural education in British Columbia. For those of us who are not from the larger centres — the lower mainland — and certainly live in the rural areas of our province, education, like many other aspects of our lives, is vitally important to us. Whether you live in downtown Vancouver or North Island or in the northeast part of our province, our children are by far the most important thing that we have to look at as a government. We have to ensure that they are educated properly. Their quality of life — and we can talk about the social side of things — has to be dealt with, and we as a government try and do that.

There are unique differences in the rural education systems, and that is recognized in the geographic factors when it comes to funding formulas. We actually, as a government, in '06-07 have estimated that about \$143.7 million additional will go to our rural schools to accommodate some of the challenges and the differences they have — whether it be our transportation systems or whether it be the distance that we see and some of the challenges. But we've implemented protocols that will allow our students in some of the more rural and remote areas of British Columbia to be able to access what those in the lower mainland, for example, do.

Population certainly allows you more opportunity in some cases. Our per-pupil funding has steadily gone up. In our area, at the same time, our student population is going down. I think that since 2001 we've seen roughly 37,000 fewer students in the public education system. Over the next five years we're projecting roughly another 30,000 fewer. We've done a number of great things. We see what takes place.

The member talked about the split classes and the challenges there. I think it's fair to say that that goes back 50 or 60 years to the small schoolhouses back on the prairies or in British Columbia when we had not enough students, because rural British Columbia is not unlike other rural areas in our province. They're rural.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

It takes, I think, some special people to be out there living and enjoying the rural aspects of our province. We generate an incredible amount of revenue that is shipped down so that we can drive our economy of this province. But it's a lifestyle choice — one I've chosen, and I've been in the northeast part of the province all my life. My wife and I have raised two wonderful daughters. Our youngest is just going into grade 12 next year, and I have nothing but good things to say about our education system. I'm a very proud father to watch my children attend the schools that I went to, to attend and graduate from the high school that I did.

This is about more than just good policy. It's about good teachers. It's about good educators and about good people within our education system. We injected \$150 million in additional money last year into the education system, which allowed the educators and our school boards to hire an additional 1,600 teachers, education assistants and support staff.

We're building on what we have, and what we have is a wonderful education system. We're seeing our graduation rates increase for first nations as well as all students in British Columbia. We're seeing our students compete and become some of the best academic students in the world. That's something we should be extremely proud of.

Is that a result of you and me in this building and in this chamber? I don't think we can take credit for that. I think we have a direction that we want to take education in. We as legislators set that direction. The people on the ground implement that direction. That's our teachers. That's our principals. That's our special ed assistants. That is all of the people involved in the education system.

I think we can be very thankful, not just for rural British Columbia but for all British Columbia, that we have those people. We have the people in this Legislative Assembly that recognize the importance of education. I'm proud to be a British Columbian. I'm extremely proud of what we've been able to do in our education system, and I think all we can do is continue to get better and better and better as the days and years go forward.

I thank the member for North Island for bringing up the issues and the challenges faced by rural British Columbia but also the great opportunities. I can tell you that living in a rural or remote area, although we don't have some of the things that the larger centres have in downtown Vancouver, from my perspective and as the representative of Peace River South, we have much, much more.

C. Trevena: I thank the member for Peace River South for his response.

I think we agree on one thing — that bringing up children in a rural community offers them unique opportunities, and the education system for many children is fabulous in our rural areas. There are the opportunities beyond school — being able to go out in the evenings and not worrying about where your kids are, or your kids going out and playing and not having to worry about where they are. There is that freedom. However, there are concerns for schools and for parents who see their children going through the school system in rural communities, for the two reasons I think I highlighted.

[1055]

One is the areas that are remote, where student numbers are growing, often where there are first nations, and where people are there not because it's a lifestyle choice but because that's where their home is — where their home has been for many generations. That's where the school is. We need to make sure the funding does address these sorts of needs, where peo-

ple are there — possibly with greater needs, living in crowded homes. The social pressures are very great on the families. We have to be very aware of this when we're looking at funding for schools. It's not just a matter of how much each pupil gets but more of a sociological analysis as well.

The other critical area — which, again, the member pointed out and chose to highlight — is the fact that school numbers are declining for some rural schools. We're seeing that the schools are shrinking because of communities shrinking. I think we have to address how we look at funding, because people have a right to keep their kids educated in the communities where they live. We're talking about large distances in most of rural British Columbia between different communities, so the concept of busing — of young children, particularly — is very troubling to parents and educators.

We really do need to make sure we are looking at funding formulas in a way that is addressing more of the geographical sense as well as the number of pupils. Although there are top-ups for pupils, there aren't for teachers. One of the issues I come across quite regularly is that we get a lot of teachers who feel very isolated and look for some sort of assistance in that way — some sort of reinstated northern allowance to encourage them to come to rural communities and stay so that maybe the possibility is there that they don't have to teach split classes and that we can get more teachers into the schoolrooms, perhaps.

We really do have to be inventive in how we make sure our children get a proper education, a quality education. We do offer our children a lot of benefits in rural communities.

Hon. C. Richmond: I call Motion 60 on the order paper.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 60 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

Motions on Notice

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MANUFACTURED HOME PARK LANDLORDS

H. Bains: It gives me a great deal of pleasure to speak on an issue that I hold near and dear to my heart and that all New Democrats hold near and dear to their hearts.

For the record, I will read the motion.

[Be it resolved that this House urge the government to ensure that, when a landlord of a manufactured home park gives notice to end a tenancy agreement in order to convert all or a significant part of a manufactured home park to another use, manufactured home owners receive adequate compensation from the landlord and the landlord is required to put in place a relocation agreement that is satisfactory to the manufactured home owners.]

I'd like to acknowledge that there are a number of those who are affected by this issue. They are representatives of Active Manufactured Home Owners from the Island, and then the Surrey Manufactured Home Owners Association, in the audience witnessing this debate. I welcome them to the House.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

Today, by introducing this motion, I want to encourage the government to amend the appropriate acts to bring fairness to the manufactured home owners in the event that the landlord decides to develop the land park for other uses and give notice to the homeowners.

The current compensation package for manufactured home owners is grossly unfair. Manufactured home owners are expected to vacate the home park with a maximum of 12 months' free rent. In 2002 this government changed the legislation to eliminate the \$10,000 moving expenses compensation. This motion is asking for fair compensation for manufactured home owners who may be displaced because the owners decide to develop the land for other use.

[1100]

This goal can be achieved by making certain amendments. For example: (1) the park owner is required to provide 12 months' notice of eviction; (2) park owners, at the time of eviction notices, are required to pay the manufactured home owners 12 months' rent or \$10,000, whichever is greater, for relocation expenses; (3) the park owners must develop a relocation plan that is acceptable to homeowners; (4) homeowners are given first right of refusal to rent or buy the residential unit being developed; (5) the park owners compensate at the fair market value for a home that cannot be moved or if the new park does not accept it due to its age.

Many municipalities have realized the impact that the redevelopment of these parks has on its citizens and are adopting policies to protect the manufactured home owners. Municipalities such as Coquitlam, Kelowna, Peachland and Summerland have already adopted these policies, and many other municipalities are reviewing this policy to be adopted. The Association of Vancouver Island Municipalities has adopted a similar motion in the last couple of weeks to protect these homeowners.

This is not enough. We need provincial legislation to protect these manufactured home owners. They are our seniors, those who chose this type of lifestyle for their retirement. Manufactured home parks provide much-needed affordable housing in this province. We must not condone the elimination of manufactured home parks without a plan to protect the homeowners in these parks.

Can you imagine an 85-year-old woman who has lived in a manufactured home park for 25 years — the last ten as a widow, paying \$500-a-month pad rental — being told she will have to move within 12 months because the land is being redeveloped? The most compensation she will receive is \$6,000.

Her home is at least 25 years old and cannot be moved, because it is not CSA-approved. She is familiar with the area. This her home. This is her community. How do you think this will affect her state of mind and her health at that age? She is left homeless, because our laws allow it.

It is unacceptable to treat our seniors like this. They are our parents, and they are our grandparents — the very people that built this province so that we can claim to live in a province in a country that is the best in the world. They are the very people that made sacrifices so that we can enjoy a better life.

These people need to be treated with respect and dignity in the last few years of their lives, and they need our support. I urge all members of this House to support this motion so that we can continue to protect those seniors that deserve our respect.

R. Hawes: Thank you to the member for bringing the motion. It's a very interesting motion. I want to speak just for a few minutes about balance.

Prior to 2004, or the legislation we brought forward that made some changes, landlords were required to assist tenants in a relocation plan, up to \$10,000. If there was a mobile home that did not qualify for moving because it was not CSA-approved and couldn't be moved, there was no compensation paid at all. Nothing.

There were frequent disputes resulting in arbitration, and the arbitration in those cases was costly and time-consuming. I'm sure that in many instances, tenants were not able to receive the compensation they needed prior to having to move their mobile home. Our legislation requires the landlord to pay 12 months' compensation without question, and that money is to be paid prior to the expiry of the tenancy, which allows funding for the move to take place.

There are instances where costs are higher than 12 months' worth of rent. In those particular cases, I know that many of the landlords are paying voluntarily — for example, the recent one in the member's area in Surrey, with Seacrest. I'm informed that the purchaser of the park, Lark Developments, is prepared to and is paying to move double-wides, which cost \$10,000-plus. They're prepared to fund those costs. They have also found locations for the majority of the mobile homes that are in that park now, and those homes will be moved.

[1105]

When I mentioned balance, I think we shouldn't forget how these mobile home parks came to be in most of the locations that they exist. In municipalities they were put into areas that were basically undeveloped. The land value was fairly low, and over time, things grew up around these. No community is static, so redevelopment takes place. It's a natural evolution.

What we shouldn't do is anything that's going to stop that evolution. What we should be doing, rather, is encouraging municipalities to zone alternate properties so that relocations will not be difficult, but these things never take place. Trailer parks are not built in high-value areas that are undergoing redevelopment.

If you think about how cities grew up, the residential areas in most cities at one time were farmland or ranchland. Then they become residential properties. Then, over time, redevelopment takes place, higher densities come in, and apartment buildings start to be built where there were once residential houses.

It's the same thing with mobile home parks. Where there are mobile home parks, ultimately, as redevelopment in the city takes place and densification takes place, the value to the owner of the mobile home park is not in maintaining it as a mobile home park. Economics drive the owner to make a different choice.

This is the kind of thing I hope we all respect in this province — that the owner has some ability to make choices. Now, if we impose conditions on the owners of these parks that become so onerous it's not possible to get a return on the investment that many have made in this type of property, that will discourage others from making further investments.

In fact, if we want to see fewer and fewer mobile home parks and properties that would encourage affordable housing, just impose conditions that make it difficult on the owner, and you will see less investment. This is a big discouragement. That's where I'm talking about balance.

Balance is required to protect both sides in the equation: the landlord and the tenant. Maybe there is more discussion that needs to take place with municipalities. I'm convinced there is, because I'm aware of many municipalities that discourage the development of mobile home parks.

I can tell you that if you're looking for affordable housing in this type of housing, that's the kind of thing we should really be discussing with UBCM — finding solutions for and encouraging municipalities to get involved in the zoning and the setting aside of properties that could be zoned for mobile home park development or manufactured home development.

To just say we're going to impose upon existing mobile home park owners new requirements that, frankly, are going to be extremely expensive, and in some cases.... When you read the wording of the motion and the conditions the member laid out, such as relocation satisfactory to the tenant, what does that mean? That leaves it wide open for all kinds of arguments and the kind of arbitration that used to take place.

While I understand the intent of the member's motion, I don't think it does speak to balance, so this is not the kind of motion that I could possibly support. I could support opening a dialogue between UBCM and the provincial government to find ways to further accommodate manufactured home parks, but not this way.

Again, while I applaud the intent, I think the motion is not one that supplies the kind of balance that's needed to ensure that we have an ongoing supply of affordable housing.

M. Farnworth: I rise to speak in support of the motion. One of the biggest challenges that many people

face is affordable housing. One of the issues that is too often ignored by the media in the current building boom that's taking place here, particularly in the lower mainland and other parts of British Columbia — in fact, right across the country — is the issue around manufactured home parks and their redevelopment.

[1110]

In the case of many of them, as my colleague the member for Surrey-Newton pointed out, they have been around for a particularly long time. Many of the people living in them are seniors or, in many cases, depending on the manufactured home park, low-income. They've been living there for quite some time, so their unit is no longer easily movable. That's because it does not meet CSA standards.

Many communities actively discourage manufactured home parks, so it makes it very difficult for people to relocate, whereas 10, 15 or 20 years ago, with a decision to move, while never an easy one, there was usually somewhere to go. That's not the case today. It's increasingly difficult. People find themselves being forced out of a place where they may have lived for 15 or 20 years.

In the case of my own community, in Port Coquitlam at the Lazy River Mobile Home Park, people who've lived there for more than 20 years are now finding themselves in the unenviable position of having to find somewhere else to go. That quite often means leaving the community where they've lived for 15 or 20 years. That's just not acceptable when you are 80 or 85 years of age or on a fixed income without the ability.... You've got your support network. You're close to transportation and shops, and because you can't go somewhere quickly, or it's not easy to get to, you're in a real problem.

We need to ensure that there are rules and regulations in place to assist people, and the motion that the member put forward is one way of dealing with that. I think it is not too onerous to ask those who are redeveloping parks — and are doing so to increase densification, to make a profit, which is great — to ensure that the people who are being displaced are involved in the process, that there is a mechanism in place for them to find somewhere else to live and that there is assistance available to them from the developer.

The province has a role to play. I think one of the things the province can be doing and should be doing is not just having a dialogue but being proactive with local government in terms of recognizing the role that manufactured home parks play in our communities in providing housing options for people — people who don't want the traditional, 2,300-square-foot, four-bedroom houses that are very popular out in the suburbs or who may not need a townhouse. A manufactured home is the type of lifestyle choice they want, and we have to ensure that those people are being addressed.

I am pleased to rise and speak in support of this motion, and I hope the government considers seriously the comments being put forward by the member for Surrey-Newton on this important issue. It's about people, and that's what our job is.

These are citizens in our communities who have been there for 15 or 20 years, paying taxes and supporting our communities, and now they're being forced out of their homes. We need to ensure that they're treated fairly and respectfully. With that, I add my voice to the debate, and I look forward to hearing the discussion and the comments of other members of this House.

D. Routley: As someone from Vancouver Island, as Housing critic for the opposition and as a person who, as a young child, had grandparents who lived in a mobile home park, I appreciate very much the many layers of benefit that our society receives from this excellent option for affordable housing.

Not only do the residents of mobile home parks benefit from the affordable housing aspect, the financial affordability of their living circumstances, but they also help our communities care for each other. Small communities develop in these mobile home parks where people are very supportive of one another. They become interdependent. We see legions of people leaving in the morning and coming back in the afternoon, with one person who can drive transporting three or four others who can't.

All these benefits help us as a community accommodate each other's needs, but they also help us as legislators to manage public accounts. They do, indeed, save us money beyond the money that's saved by those who benefit from the affordable living.

[1115]

The hot real estate market in British Columbia is putting extraordinary pressure on these small communities. It's putting extraordinary pressure on landlords to realize the profit of converting to market housing and more expensive options. They're putting at risk a great number of British Columbians who rely very heavily on these affordable options.

I rise to speak in favour of this motion, in favour of any motion that would give more protection to the occupants and tenants of mobile home parks, because it is an important aspect of our housing continuum and is put at great risk by the current housing market. Currently, this government is not doing enough to protect those residents, who are indeed vulnerable not only because of the attractive locations that most of these parks occupy but also because they don't have the power, the financial strength, to be able to respond to protect their assets. These are lifelong investments, and we need to protect them.

J. Brar: I also rise to support the motion introduced by my colleague from Surrey-Newton.

Manufactured homes have provided affordable housing for many years in British Columbia, particularly for seniors. Many people who reside in these manufactured homes are seniors, and a significant majority of those are people with limited incomes. These seniors have spent their entire lives building this beautiful country and beautiful British Columbia. Now it is time that we as a government, we as a community, we as a society, give back to them.

What's happening at this point in time is that because of the hot housing market, many developers have begun to buy these mobile home parks or trailer parks only to develop the land for a housing project. Meanwhile, the seniors who live in these manufactured homes are being forced to find space for their homes elsewhere.

This is a prime example of how the so-called good economy of British Columbia is not benefiting all British Columbians, particularly the seniors. This economy is not benefiting them. It is actually hurting them. This is also an example of the uncaring nature of this government, which needs to step in and listen to these seniors and help them, particularly at this point in time.

For these people, it's sometimes difficult to relocate due to lack of space available elsewhere. That's the nature of the reality at this point in time. Sometimes even the owner who has the responsibility to find a space also fails to find space for these people. They have no choice but just to go somewhere where they're being told to go, and that's not the way we should treat the seniors.

I must say this: this is not an issue where we need more dialogue. We need some action. We need very quick action, because there are a lot of seniors who, at this point in time, are being relocated. Once again, I fully support the motion and the amendments put forth in this motion. I hope the members from the other side will also support and listen to these seniors so that we can treat them with respect and dignity.

B. Ralston: I rise to support the motion that's put forward by my colleague from Surrey-Newton.

This issue is an issue of active debate in the city of Surrey, arising out of a park called Seacrest Park at 8th Avenue and 160th Street in the southern part of Surrey. A number of those residents have come to city council expressing their concern about being displaced.

The difficulty for mobile home park owners arises, generally, because many of the units have been at a location for a number of years. Sometimes they no longer meet the relevant standards to be actually transported by truck, and other parks will not accept them if they're too old as units.

[1120]

Therefore, the owners are in a position where they have an investment in the manufactured home, but they're not really able to transfer it to another location. If you've lived in a location for 15 or 20 years, if you're on a fixed income and you're elderly, that's a very, very distressing situation.

The member for Surrey-Newton has put forward a series of proposals that are reasonable. They're doable. I would simply support those proposals and would urge the government to listen to this debate and put those proposals into action as soon as possible in order to avoid further distress to people, not only in Surrey but throughout the province, who find themselves in a similar situation as applicants come forward to rezone former mobile home parks to other uses.

D. Thorne: I rise today to support the motion of the member from Surrey. I would like to take a position

today and just speak a little bit differently about the role of municipalities under the Local Government Act and what power they actually have.

I support legislative changes, specifically to sections 42 to 44 of the mobile home protection tenancy act. The municipalities that are in a position to rezone mobile home parks do not have the power under the Local Government Act to actually bring in a bylaw. The best they can do is bring in a policy to try and protect residents of mobile homes from the creeping urbanization and rampant development that is overtaking most of our municipalities.

I speak as a former councillor in the city of Coquitlam. We were requested to by several people who lived in several parks in Coquitlam. We have seven mobile home parks in Coquitlam, and a lot of them are right now under development application for rezoning. We were not able, as other municipalities have not been able to, to bring in a bylaw, because we are not allowed to do that under the Local Government Act.

The cities have done their best by bringing in protection for relocation and compensation, for all of the reasons my colleagues have just talked about — I'm not going to repeat them — but they're unable to do more, actually, than bring in a policy. The provincial government will hopefully listen to reason in this instance and change those sections to protect the mobile home owners who live in these parks.

I don't think I can say much more than that. Simply, I hope the government is listening to all the people across the province who are under threat of losing not only their homes but also of losing all the money they have put into them. They're some of our most vulnerable citizens, some of whom are here today.

The Local Government Act should be changed, or sections of the mobile home protection act provincially.

J. Horgan: It's a pleasure to participate in the debate today on the motion brought forward by the member for Surrey-Newton. Certainly, I'd like to echo some of the comments of my colleague from Cowichan-Ladysmith, the New Democrat Housing critic, who knows full well the value of this component of housing stock in our communities right across British Columbia.

Particularly in the community of Malahat-Juan de Fuca, in my community.... I have a number of communities. I've spoken of them at length in this Legislature, but I'm going to do it again. In my community of Langford, where I have my home, there are numerous mobile home and manufactured home parks. Hundreds and hundreds of residents have brought their concerns and fears to my attention and also to the attention of the district of Langford.

Langford, like other municipal entities across British Columbia, is contemplating what sort of action it can take within the confines of the Local Government Act and other opportunities, whether it be by bylaw or policy, to protect this component of housing stock but, more importantly, to protect the people in those mobile home and manufactured home parks.

They're mostly seniors, many being people with disabilities and other infirmities that make it difficult for them to participate in the booming economy we have in terms of housing and development in the Western Communities. My colleague from Esquimalt-Metchosin knows as well as I and other members in this House do the importance of that housing stock to our communities.

[1125]

It's not just Langford in Malahat-Juan de Fuca. It's the district of Sooke. It's out the west coast to Port Renfrew; up the Malahat to Spectacle Lake; into Cobble Hill, Shawnigan Lake, Cowichan Bay. Virtually every community within my provincial electoral district has a significant component of manufactured homes, and it's a vital part of housing in my district.

People want to come to south Vancouver Island to live. Why wouldn't they? It's a beautiful place. But we need to have affordable housing for those residents, and that is why I'm supporting this motion.

L. Krog: Hundreds and hundreds of my constituents in Nanaimo live in manufactured home parks, and they cover the full range, as they do in every community in this province. They range from young families, for whom this is the first home they can manage to acquire because of limited incomes, to seniors who are on fixed incomes, who will not see increases in their incomes, for whom this final home purchase represents their most significant investment.

It is about community. As regional districts, municipalities allow and potentially allow the redevelopment of these sites for manufactured home sites into other forms of housing, essentially you are taking out of that community people who are already part of it. You are forcing them into situations where they will lose their investments, where they will diminish the sense of community. They will also destroy the sense of community that other members have talked about this morning: where you find in manufactured home parks the kind of cooperation and sharing and caring about one another, the kind of sense of security that is so important.

One appreciates the importance of encouraging investment in this area. One appreciates that mobile home and manufactured home parks will not be developed if there is a tremendous disincentive, if those who own and operate them find them not to be profitable. But the reality is that they are, generally, profitable enterprises. They are secure moneymakers; they are good investments.

But with increasing pressure on urbanized land, if we allow this form of housing to disappear, we are going to continue to create communities based on one economic strata, if you will, where we will have communities comprised only of those who have money, who can afford the tremendous housing costs, for instance, that exist in Vancouver.

Imagine a community where grandparents can't manage to survive in a manufactured home park near to their own families. Imagine a community where

young families have no opportunity to purchase housing at the lowest level. Often that is what a manufactured home park represents for those people. Otherwise, we are going to end up with rather homogeneous, uniform communities which are not healthy.

Some would argue that the concept of a manufactured home park is, in fact, a gated community. I would argue that it is not that. It is the kind of community that encourages and keeps citizens in their hometowns and gives them an ability to remain in their home communities. It provides a transition, in particular for seniors moving from single-family dwellings that they can no longer handle in terms of maintenance and cost and allows them in their own towns....

I can't imagine the city of Nanaimo without manufactured home parks. So I speak in favour of the motion this morning that my friend and colleague the member for Surrey-Newton has brought to this chamber. It is important, and it requires debate and is an important issue for all British Columbians.

However, hon. Speaker, noting the hour, I would move adjournment of the debate.

L. Krog moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Richmond: I call private Motion 62 on the order paper.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 62 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

NAMING OF 49TH-AND-CAMBIE SKYTRAIN STATION

H. Lali: Thank you, hon. Speaker.

[Be it resolved that this House requests TransLink to name the RAV Canada Line station at 49th and Cambie Street the "Punjabi Market - Langara Station" to reflect the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood.]

One would wonder why I'm bringing this forward. Well, it's obviously for reasons that the RAV line should also reflect the multi-ethnic nature of our city of Vancouver.

[1130]

Canada is noted as being the most multicultural country in the world because we have people from all different ethnic groups who live in this great country of ours. Within Canada, British Columbia is noted as the most multicultural province. In this province, Vancouver is the most multicultural of all cities, and we're very proud of that fact. I went to university in Vancouver and lived there for a few years, and I find Vancouver just to be the most fabulous city in the world.

In Vancouver there are people, as I stated, from all parts of the world. South Asians form the second-

largest visible minority after Chinese Canadians and East Asians in Vancouver. Growing up as a child, finding Indian varieties of goods and foods, etc., was very difficult, especially if you lived in a community like Merritt where we had a small Indo-Canadian population. It was a real outing way back in the late '60s and early '70s to come with my mom and dad and my family.... Actually, at that time, way back almost 40 years ago, there was one store we used to go to, which was on Hastings on the side of a warehouse, to find South Asian foods. Then later on, when the first store opened up on Main Street, we used to go to that particular store in the neighbourhood of 49th and Main Street.

I want to talk a little bit about the Punjabi Market. In 1970 the first Punjabi store went up near about 49th and Main. In 1981 the Punjabi Market Association was officially formed. In 1993 Vancouver city council approved street signs in the Punjabi language for the Punjabi Market. The present Premier was mayor of Vancouver at that time. This year, 2006, marks the 25th anniversary of the formation of the Punjabi Market Association.

The current president is Daljit Singh Sidhu. He is the current and longstanding president of the Punjabi Market Association. Daljit was the first vice-president of the organization when it was initially formed, and Daljit has served continuously and consecutively on the executive of the Punjabi Market Association for 25 years since its inception.

Some of the other prominent individuals who are currently involved.... I know that my colleague the member for Burnaby-Edmonds is going to mention some names later on as well. Some of the prominent business persons are: Gable Sing Pabla, of Malia restaurant fame — as you know, he is a very well-known and respected business person; Harinder Sing Tuur; Sucha Singh Clair — he was actually the first one to put up a store in the Punjabi Market; Didar Sing Laal; Jaswi Sing Baud — actually, Jaswi Baud and I went to high school together in Merritt; and also the Shukla brothers of Bombay Suites.

It would be great to have the Canada RAV line at 49th and Cambie named as the Punjabi Market-Langara Station.

Hon. C. Taylor: I'm pleased to be here this morning for the opportunity to speak to this important initiative spearheaded by members of my community to name the Canada line station at 49th and Cambie in honour of the Punjabi Market, a thriving South Asian business community located in my riding of Vancouver-Langara.

The Punjabi Market is a section of Main Street between 48th and 51st that's well known in the Vancouver community as the easiest way to transport oneself directly to India for the afternoon. The district is filled with traditional Indian music, spectacular food and restaurants, shops stocked with traditional goods such as silks and gold jewellery that have a wide appeal to all of the citizens of Vancouver and, of course, our tourists.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

During my time on Vancouver city council I had the privilege of working with this community towards the formal designation of this neighbourhood as the Punjabi Market. As the member opposite has mentioned, in 1993 the then mayor of Vancouver, now our Premier, Gordon Campbell, oversaw the installation of special bilingual street signs naming the Punjabi Market. Of course, by bilingual I mean English and Punjabi.

This is an important neighbourhood recognizing and catering to Vancouver and British Columbia's diversity and ever-present eagerness to sample the cultural mix that does set us apart and makes us so unique.

[1135]

The Punjabi Market reminds us just how strong, vibrant and dynamic our South Asian community is here in B.C. Mr. Daljit Sidhu, whom many of us know, is a prominent member of Vancouver's South Asian community, as mentioned, and the president of the original Punjabi Market Association. I met with Mr. Sidhu on September 23 last year in my office and was delighted with his proposal that the Canada line station at 49th and Cambie be given such a fitting name. I immediately wrote to Patricia Jacobsen, CEO of TransLink, with my support of the suggestion on October 7. The CEO of TransLink referred my office to Naina Sloan, RAV project manager, vice-president corporate affairs and corporate secretary.

Ms. Sloan wrote me October 21 acknowledging that there is significant community interest in naming and advising, and that the names have been incorporated in InTransit BC, the selected contractors in early system design and development work. We then contacted InTransit BC to indicate, again, our support of the name Punjabi Market-Langara Station for the station at 49th and Cambie.

We subsequently suggested to Mr. Sidhu that he and his supporters attend a community comment opportunity at the Canada line South Cambie open house on February 7. As recently as this April Mr. Sidhu met with the new vice-president of corporate affairs at Canada line, Mr. Richard Sawchuk, to further pursue this suggestion of giving the Canada line station at 49th and Cambie this fitting name. So you can see it takes a lot of effort and a lot of work by many people to try and get the attention and focus in the right direction for this particular initiative. I welcome the motion that's been brought forward by the member opposite as another step towards accomplishing this worthwhile goal.

Our Premier met on March 31 with original Punjabi Market Association representatives: Director Herinder Toor, Treasurer Jasbir Bath and Mr. Sidhu, as well as with our own hardworking MLA for Surrey-Tynehead, parliamentary secretary for Multiculturalism and Immigration, Mr. Dave Hayer. Another important community leader, as mentioned, has been Mr. Pabla, past President of the Punjabi Market Association who, un-

fortunately, was unable to attend that meeting. But Premier Campbell has indicated his support, as well, in naming the Canada line Station at 49th and Cambie in recognition of the Punjabi Market Association in Vancouver-Langara.

Something I feel very strongly about, and that was certainly reinforced during my time at the CBC as I travelled this country, is the emphasis that we as Canadians, as government and as members of our community must place on valuing and embracing the uniqueness and the diversity of our communities. How better to do that than to give the local station on this important project a name which truly recognizes the distinct character of the local community, Punjabi Market-Langara Station?

A. Dix: It's an excellent day when we can sit down together on both sides of the House and both speak in favour of the important motion put forward by the member for Yale-Lillooet. I want to thank the member for his leadership with respect to this issue. I think it's an important issue. It's an initiative that at its origins, as the member for Yale-Lillooet and as the Minister of Finance have suggested, comes from the community, and I think it gives us an important opportunity here for the Canada line, in fact, to represent the communities it goes through. I think that in the naming of the stations, it's particularly important for us to deliver on, to come through here in the 25th anniversary of the Punjabi Market Association.

I want to support strongly the motion put forward by the member for Yale-Lillooet. I think this is an opportunity for this House in our jobs as representatives of the community, as representatives of people, certainly, in my community of Vancouver-Kingsway, who are strongly supportive of this initiative. I want to thank the member again for raising this motion, and I ask all members of the House to support it.

S. Hawkins: I rise in support of Motion 62 that the RAV Canada line station at 49th and Cambie be named the Punjabi Market-Langara Station to reflect the ethnic diversity of the neighbourhood.

[1140]

As noted, the MLA from Langara has been working for nine months on this issue, on this request, to get the attention of TransLink. You know, she's well aware, as is the member for Surrey-Tynehead, that the community has been working diligently and would like this station to be named Punjabi Market-Langara Station.

I think it's really fitting that the Canada line be reflective of the immigrants and neighbourhoods and communities that built this great country. I'm a very proud Canadian. I feel very lucky and grateful to live in this country, but I'm also a proud immigrant from India. I came to Canada from New Delhi when I was five years old. I'm the daughter of a teacher and a homemaker who have raised six kids in Canada since 1963. Over the past 43 years I know, like other immigrants to this country, that we've been really proud to celebrate our heritage and our culture, and I certainly

support my Indian community in bringing this request forward.

We know that Canada was built by immigrants one neighbourhood, one community at a time. When I think of Vancouver, I do think of it as a world-class multicultural city. We see all kinds of neighbourhoods established all over this beautiful city. I think it's what gives Vancouver its character, and it makes it that kind of world-class city that people want to visit and experience, from Chinatown to the Italian neighbourhoods to Punjabi Market.

I know the member for Yale-Lillooet mentioned a little bit about the Punjabi Market, and they will be celebrating their 25th anniversary. It's also known as Little India, because when I talk to friends, and they talk about the Punjabi Market, sometimes they say they're going to Little India. It is a colourful, vibrant, wonderful experience in the commercial district in Vancouver. It's been officially recognized by the city of Vancouver as being primarily Indo-Canadian businesses.

Under the leadership of the Premier, who was the former mayor of Vancouver, in 1993 Punjabi signs were placed all over the Punjabi Market. It's not that big; it's small. I think it's five or six blocks of Main Street around 49th Avenue in South Vancouver, about a 20-minute drive from downtown. When I go into that little market — and I don't know how many people have visited India — it sort of reminds me of going to little markets in India. It's very similar with all the fine food and the silks and the jewellery. I guess someone like me would notice that. I think it's got the most jewellery stores I've ever seen on any street anywhere. It's just fabulous — very exotic, and it really is a wonderful experience.

Again, the member from Langara and the member for Yale-Lillooet mentioned that Daljit Sidhu was the president of the original Punjabi Market Association. They've had a tremendous influence on that neighbourhood and, I think, on the quality of life in our city, being able to present something like that in such a clustered area. I just think it would be fabulous — wouldn't it be great? — that when we welcome the world in 2010, to be able to show off these kinds of communities that show off our ethnic diversity and show it off to the world. Wouldn't it be great for the neighbourhood to celebrate their heritage and the contribution made to Vancouver and to Canada, and wouldn't it be wonderful for visitors who take the Canada line to be able to know that there's a stopping place that is unique and fairly close by that offers them a wonderful ethnic cultural experience?

For all the reasons I'm sure that we've heard and that we're going to hear this morning, I support the member for Yale-Lillooet and the member from Langara's efforts and all the people in the community who are requesting that TransLink give serious consideration to naming the RAV Canada line station at 49th and Main Street the Punjabi Market-Langara Station.

R. Chouhan: I too rise to thank the member for Yale-Lillooet for his initiative and foresight and leader-

ship for bringing this motion to name this station at 49th and Main as the Punjabi Market-Langara Station. It's important to celebrate the diversity of Canada. I would suggest that we go one step further, that not only do we name this station as Punjabi Market-Langara Station; we should all along the Canada line name every station to reflect the multicultural aspect, the face of Canada.

[1145]

It would be wonderful to showcase ourselves in 2010 to the world — that Canada really celebrates its diversity and that we are proud of ourselves. It would be wonderful to do it that way, so I strongly recommend that we name, definitely, this station at 49th Street, Langara.

At the same time, in his opening comments, the member for Yale-Lillooet named several prominent people who have participated and made sure that we have a strong Punjabi market there. I also want to name a few more important people who have been participating to make sure that this part of Vancouver becomes truly very strong and successful. They are Mr. Bhagwant Singh Dhaha; Sushil Batra; Sarbjit Singh Khuranna; Ashok Sharma; Singh Foods — now operating, I think, as Fruiticana; and Mr. Chouhan of Chouhan Enterprises fame — no relation to this member. They have participated and made sure that Punjabi Market has become the most successful market in Canada. To celebrate that, it's about time that we at least name this station to reflect that.

J. Nuraney: I, too, rise in support of this motion. It is important that we do recognize and reflect the true, what I call, new face of Canada, which is the diversity and the ethnicity that has become such a rich asset of our country and our province. It is well known and a fact that our Premier, when he was a mayor, was the first mayor in our province and perhaps in Canada to recognize this area as the Punjabi Market. This not only reflects the contribution and the importance of this community amongst us, but also promotes what I call a colourful experience of shopping and retailing in our province. Our Minister of Finance also has been a tremendous advocate of making sure that such diversity is given proper place in our society.

There have been people who have promoted this concept and the idea — people like Daljit Sadhu, who has been mentioned before; Mr. Toor, Mr. Sharma, Mr. Pabla — who are really well-known figures in that part of the city and who have continuously promoted the idea of not only the Punjabi Market but now requesting TransLink to name the station the Punjabi Market-Langara Station. I think this truly reflects what this government's efforts are in terms of reflecting the diversity of our province, and I do support this motion wholeheartedly.

D. Chudnovsky: I, too, rise to speak in support of this motion. Members here on both sides of the House may not be aware, but the Punjabi Market is at the corner of the great constituency of Vancouver-Kensington.

Members are aware that Vancouver-Kensington is the finest of the 79 constituencies, but they may not have known that at the southwest corner of Vancouver-Kensington lies the Punjabi Market. I was considering bringing an amendment to amend the motion to make it the Punjabi Market-Langara-Kensington station of the Canada line, but I think that might be a little too complex, and we should move ahead with this motion.

I did want to add one comment to the terrific things that have been said by members on both sides of the House. That is that as well as being a symbol of the self-confidence and strength and maturity and the contribution of the South Asian community to our city, the Punjabi Market is also a window. It's a window for those of us who aren't of South Asian background to see into the lives of our neighbours and to understand better the lives of our neighbours and to build our community together. It's a great contribution, and those people who have worked for many, many years on building and strengthening the Punjabi Market are to be congratulated and thanked for providing for all of us a window into the world of the South Asian community, which makes us all stronger. I support the motion.

[1150]

J. Brar: I also rise to support Motion 62, introduced by my colleague from Yale-Lillooet. I'm pleased to see that both sides of the House are supporting this motion. I also would like to say thank you to all the people, the members of the Punjabi Market, for their work on this issue to convince both sides to support the motion.

British Columbia, as a province, is known as "Beautiful British Columbia." We are beautiful because we have green forests, the mountains, the ocean and clean air. Moreover, we are beautiful because we have people from every part of the globe in this community. Because of our rich cultural diversity, we are very well positioned to understand and compete in the global community.

What we must continue is to take initiatives like this one so that we can demonstrate to the global community that our community and our structure do reflect what we are. Therefore, I support this motion from the bottom of my heart. I would like to say thank you to Daljit Singh Sidhu, Mr. Parmala and others, as I said before, for taking this initiative and convincing both sides to make it a reality. I urge every member of this House to support this motion. It's a great motion. Let's move forward.

H. Bains: I, too, take this opportunity and rise to speak in favour of this very important motion. I believe it is something that members on both sides of the House... When they are talking on the same page and supporting an issue as important as this one, it's a good day for British Columbia and a good day for all of our communities.

At the same time, I want to thank the member for Yale-Lillooet for bringing this motion forward. I want

to thank many of the members who have been working in the last number of months to promote this issue, and I want to thank those who were mentioned earlier, who are on the executive of the original Punjabi Market.

In addition to all of those, I do want to mention a couple of names. Mr. Daljit Singh Sidhu, a good friend of mine. We apprenticed in the sawmill together. He's doing his job, and I'm here today after doing our apprenticeship in a sawmill. And my good friend Sucha Singh Clair. He's also a very thriving force behind these kinds of issues and is always promoting good things.

I'm supporting it from two different angles. One, being the Olympics critic, I think this will be a wonderful opportunity for us to showcase our diversity, our different cultures and our art — as we have said, one of the goals in the Olympics. What better way of celebrating that, celebrating those cultures and promoting our diversity and showcasing all those aspects of our community, than to name this station Langara-Punjabi Market?

The RAV line is one of the key routes between the airport and downtown Vancouver and Whistler. You know, this is the first opportunity that we will be able to hit those tourists to showcase: "Here are our different communities. This is how we are all working together to make this the best country in the world to live. This is how we do this." They will have an opportunity to walk into that marketplace after looking at that station and go out there and do some shopping.

Another reason I do this is because this market is very close to me as well. This is where most of my

earnings and my wife's earnings are going, because that's where she does most of her shopping. I think it will be a wonderful idea to promote this community, once again, and this market.

The second part I think I want to push, also, is that this is a very important step towards recognizing the contributions that the Punjabi and South Asian communities have made to this country and, at the same time, embracing those communities. Those are the communities that were left out of our decision-making process for the first 50 years of the last century. I think this would recognize a step in the right direction to make sure that we are actually embracing those communities and trying to right the wrongs of the past.

Having said all of that — and I think all the good arguments were made — once again I say that I support this motion. Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity.

[1155]

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Richmond moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

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