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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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

**SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT**

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MONDAY, MAY 8, 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

##### ASIA-PACIFIC GATEWAY

**R. Lee:** Ever since February last year when the throne speech announced that the government of British Columbia was establishing an Asia-Pacific gateway strategy, progress and many developments have been made towards the formulation of the strategy. As we know, the economies of Asia have grown continuously at unprecedented rates over the last few years. The demand for Canadian products, technologies and services has been intensifying.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

As Canada's only Pacific province and with a long history of cultural, social and economic connections to the region, British Columbia has a vital role to play in leading the country's engagement with the Asia-Pacific. More and more, Canadians now recognize that British Columbia is in an enviably unique position to reap immense benefit from this new global reality developing in the Asia-Pacific as our government continues our efforts to focus on the opportunities.

Last June the Premier, for the first time in the history of this province, assigned a Minister Responsible for the Asia-Pacific Initiative and a parliamentary secretary for the Asia-Pacific Initiative to assist the minister. An advisory Asia-Pacific Trade Council was appointed last fall.

The council has established three market advisory groups — MAGs — namely, the Hong Kong-China MAG, the India MAG and the Japan MAG. Three more MAGs are being established in the coming months to reveal the status of B.C.'s current commercial relations with South Korea, Taiwan and the ASEAN states. These MAGs will prepare recommendations on how to increase trade engagements for British Columbia with these regions.

[1005]

As we know, over the past 15 years the Asia-Pacific markets have been the fastest growing in the world. However, from 1995 to 2001 B.C.'s exports to Asia-Pacific decreased from 36 percent to 21 percent of our total exports. From 2001 to 2005 exports from B.C. to Asia-Pacific grew by 25 percent, to \$8.1 billion dollars. Now 25 percent of the province's international exports goes to Asia-Pacific, and 64 percent goes to the United States.

As the economies of the Asia-Pacific regions like Hong Kong, China, India, Southeast Asia, South Korea and Taiwan continue to grow, B.C.'s two-way trade with the Asia-Pacific region has the potential to grow more rapidly than trade with other regions. The potential of this province in the Pacific has been strengthened in the last few years.

Five years ago our government set a bold course to take British Columbia into a golden decade. Since then, our province has had over 40 percent of regulations eliminated. Personal and corporate taxes have been lowered and provincial permit and licence requirements streamlined. Business tax burdens in British Columbia are now among the lowest in North America.

This kind of a competitive business environment has helped the province turn the economic corner. Now our province is leading Canada in job creation. Since December 2001 over 294,000 jobs have been created. In March our unemployment rate fell to 4.4 percent, the lowest ever recorded. Last month Standard and Poor's boosted B.C.'s credit rating to AA+.

The building up of our economic strength will open more doors, not only in Asia-Pacific. It also provides opportunities to lead the country in trade reforms. Just a couple of weeks ago members of the government cabinet held their annual joint cabinet meeting with Alberta, and a new agreement on trade, investment and labour mobility was announced. This groundbreaking initiative eliminates trade barriers between our province and Alberta. It creates a common economic market for 7.5 million people, which has a GDP 30 percent larger than Quebec's. With this agreement the new B.C.-Alberta market will be a more attractive place for Asia-Pacific investors. It is estimated by the Conference Board of Canada that this move will create \$4.8 billion of benefit to British Columbians.

The B.C. Asia-Pacific Initiative not only creates more trade for this province, but it also benefits Canada as a whole. Goods and people from other parts of Canada going to Asia will take advantage of our infrastructure, of transportation and the richness of knowledge and human connections with Asia-Pacific.

Our diverse multicultural society; the exceptional quality of life; the upcoming 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games; the Pacific gateway transportation initiative; the expanding tourist sector, with the ADS being implemented with China; the acknowledged environmental technology sector; the robust international education system and the huge potential for natural resource development are all our advantages. But we have our challenges as well.

Hundreds of jurisdictions from around the world are competing for trade, tourism, students and investment. Many jurisdictions are much more aggressive than British Columbia. For example, although our export to China almost doubled from 1995 to 2005, our market share has dropped by about 40 percent. The drop of our market share in Japan is even more staggering — almost 60 percent. It is a clear indication that more has to be done to increase the market shares of this important Asia-Pacific region.

Maintaining the status quo, of course, will only ensure that British Columbia will be falling behind. While the government is consulting with the Asia-Pacific Trade Council on the details of intercontinental trade issues, some long-term goals and objectives have emerged.

[1010]

If we are truly committed to a growing role as a gateway between our provinces in Canada, the United States and the Pacific regions, we must ensure a gateway structure with sufficient capacity to facilitate the seamless and reliable flow of people, goods, services and ideas. We must provide an open and competitive environment to attract and support business.

**S. Simpson:** I am pleased that the member has raised the issue of the Pacific gateway. We do know, of course, that it's a critical initiative, primarily a federal initiative, but a critical initiative to open up our port. I think one of the things we need to do at the outset, of course, is...

We have a lot of gateways floating around these days. We have the provincial Gateway program, which was largely a movement of commuters with some goods movement, and then, we have the Pacific gateway, which the member referenced in his comments, which really is largely about the infrastructure to ensure that our port can move forward and meet the demands of trade in this country on the Pacific, and that we have the infrastructure in terms of rail and others.

I would agree with the member that much of our future sits in the Asia-Pacific. It sits with trade relations and others with China, India and with the myriad of other countries that are throughout the Asia-Pacific. What we know is that the importance of that will largely be met by having more efficiencies in our port, better rail improvements and beginning to move forward on relations with those countries.

The other thing that we know about that is that there are a number of challenges there. As we look at the demands.... We see that today from China for coal, for other natural resources. We know the pressure that will be on to develop Enbridge and to be able to bring oil and gas and move oil and gas into the Asia-Pacific. All of those are important initiatives. They're all initiatives that we need to look hard at how we accommodate them.

I guess, though, the other thing that we need to do, as we evolve those strategies, is be very careful that we do this in a thoughtful way. I do hope that we won't be totally blinded by the financial opportunities. They're very critical. The job opportunities are very critical, but we need to also look at innovation. We need to look at ways that we move goods within our own communities. We need to look at how we use different approaches.

An example, maybe.... I keep hearing from people that we could move more goods into the Port of Vancouver off the Fraser than we do today, probably by water. We don't do that. I think that would be an interesting innovation — to start looking at how we'd do that. We need to look at, as we accelerate this devel-

opment — whether it be rail or truck, and in our ports whether it be Deltaport, whether it be the Port of Vancouver in downtown.... We need to consider: what are the community impacts there? How are those impacts going to be addressed in ways that ensure that our communities don't pay the price of economic development, that they don't pay an untoward cost there? We need to work on that.

I know in my community, which abuts right up against the Port of Vancouver, that is an issue as we accelerate rail and truck traffic into the community and how it impacts. We can deal with those challenges, but we need to be thoughtful about it, and we need to ensure we do it.

We also need to look at our responsibilities around the environment and ensure that we meet those responsibilities both at home and abroad. For example, we know that the demand in China and India for coal is huge in order to provide energy and electricity primarily, as well as for steel production. We need to ensure that we're doing the best we can to make sure that that coal is being dealt with in as clean a way as possible, and that we in fact are ensuring that that's occurring. We have responsibilities to reduce greenhouse gases worldwide, and coal is a major producer of many greenhouse gases. We need to ensure that we're doing work on that.

[1015]

What I'd say, hon. Speaker, is that I do agree with the member that the Pacific gateway is a critical piece of our future. We need to take advantage of that. We need to produce the economic opportunities and the jobs across this province. We also need to make sure that we do it in a way that meets the needs of all British Columbians and in a way that ensures that our economy prospers, but so does our environment, and so do our local communities. I'm sure that the member would want that to occur as well.

I'm pleased that the member has raised this issue. I'm pleased that I've had the opportunity to add a few comments to those of the member. I believe that if we do proceed in a thoughtful way, the Pacific gateway strategy will be beneficial to everybody, and I look forward to watching that unfold over the coming years and decades.

**R. Lee:** I would like to thank the member for Vancouver-Hastings for his kind comments and his support for the initiative. We know that the Port of Prince Rupert is being expanded to increase the capacity for container traffic, so more containers will probably be directed to Prince Rupert instead of going to Vancouver. That will help the member's riding as well.

I think we have a unique opportunity to expand our capacity in the gateway structure, including the expansion of ports and airports as well as road and railroad networks and also inland terminals. We are also looking into, for example, helping Alberta to extend their pipelines into the coastal areas. We must expand those infrastructures in order to accommodate growth between British Columbia and the Asia-Pacific.



The government is also looking to the improvement of efficiency and productivity of our transportation infrastructures through optimization and implementation of new technologies and processes. The government must commit to also ensuring the reliability of the flow of goods and people in those facilities throughout our transportation networks.

We must also strengthen our cultural and personal linkages by bringing some kind of international perspective into our school system to ensure that the social, cultural and economic engagement between B.C. and the Asia-Pacific will be enhanced. We are going to promote economic and social advantages of our cultural diversities and foster people-to-people and institutional connections between B.C. and the Asia-Pacific to, also, ensure that Asia-Pacific immigrants and students have access to services for successful economic and social transition.

We also must provide an open and competitive environment by ensuring the availability of skilled labour required by the growing economy to improve B.C.'s competitive tax and regulatory position to foster increasing business with the Asia-Pacific. We have done some of that, but we must continue to do more.

We also must open markets and reduce barriers to trade and investment with the Asia-Pacific and implement critical policies and regulatory initiatives that contribute to the efficiency and competitiveness of B.C.'s transportation gateways.

#### THE AUTO INDUSTRY

**M. Karagianis:** A couple of weeks ago I was driving through my constituency, and I happened to come up behind a Mercedes-Benz that was parked at the stoplight. It had a rather unique licence plate. The licence plate read VEGGIE 1. On the bumper was a sticker stating that the car was running on 100-percent cooking oil. Intrigued, I waved the driver over and asked him about his car. Sure enough, he was running his car on cooking oil — used vegetable oil that he had purchased from local restaurants — and he had been doing that for a very long time. He also told me he had another car at home that he'd also converted to 100-percent vegetable oil.

I've spoken before in this House about my interest in biofuel and the growing demand for biodiesel in the marketplace. I've talked to the minister responsible during estimates about the possibility of a biofuel advisory body, and I will certainly be following up with him.

[1020]

The encounter got me to thinking more, in a larger vein, of the aspect of our love for and dependency on the automobile and where we will go in the future. Over the past few months there have been a growing number of news stories about changes within the automobile industry, about layoffs because of the effects of small cars on the American car industry — a shift in the whole auto-production world. An article in the *Times Colonist* about ten days ago reported that

1,200 jobs were being cut in St. Thomas, Ontario. Ford is forecasting that 30,000 jobs will be eliminated and 14 plants closed in the coming days. This is due, just in part, to the consumers' change in purchasing patterns — buying smaller and more efficient vehicles.

It is clear to me that there needs to be a paradigm shift in the whole auto industry — a shift that I think is long overdue. The growing demand for hybrid cars is one aspect of that paradigm. The cost of gasoline is increasing, as we all know, and we're all smart enough to understand that it's going to continue to increase long into the future, either from greed or circumstances.

Locally, greater Victorians reeled last week when gas hit \$1.25 a litre. Well, welcome to the real world. Europeans have been paying far greater prices than that for a long time. My question is: why is it taking so long for the auto industry to respond? Shockingly, Chrysler-Dodge is producing V-8 hemi engines again — gas gobbling, expensive, fast and dangerous. It flies in the face of reason. While the rest of the world is moving to small Smart cars, North American manufacturers are still promoting big, fast cars. Zoom, zoom, zoom.

Well, that zoom, zoom, zoom is no longer sustainable, affordable or practical. If a simple diesel engine can run automobiles successfully on an agricultural product like vegetable oil, why is the auto industry not moving in that direction? It seems so logical. Vegetable oil is infinitely renewable, absolutely sustainable, clean, green — even the exhaust smells better than gasoline — and it offers a brilliant solution to the crisis within the farming economy.

Soy and canola crops are the way of the future, not oil-sand extraction, not offshore exploration and not oil wars in the Middle East. No. The answer lies in agriculture.

The Green Car Company in Kirkland, Washington, currently operates a very successful business that converts old Volvo station wagons and other cars to diesel engines, using a low-mileage, 2.4-litre, six-cylinder diesel motor imported from Germany. Their converted cars are now affordable for the average family and are built specifically and solely to run biodiesel.

So where are the big car manufacturers? We'll begin to see more diesel engines in new cars starting next year, but we are still years behind the Europeans where small cars, biodiesel fuel and alternative transportation is a way of life embraced by the public. Here in North America we are still entrenched in the culture of a gas-dependent automobile. We love it. We worship it. We dedicate acres of expensive prime land in urban centres to it — for parking, for highways, for car lots. We are still building new suburban communities so far from even the simple convenience store that you have to get in your car and drive for miles just to get a loaf of bread. Why is that?

Well, in part it's because we are still confused about the future of fossil fuels. An article here in the *Times Colonist* this weekend says: "Rising Oil Prices Spark Search for New Fuels." What a bulletin. Like global warming, there is a lot of conflicting evidence out

there. Predictions vary depending on who is doing the talking.

Oil companies are busy promoting an endless supply — right? — offshore or across the world or in the Alberta tar sands. Yes, it's expensive to extract and getting more and more so. Yes, oil sands extraction uses exorbitant water resources, but we need that oil — don't we? The oil companies talk to the auto companies, and between them, the unsustainable, unaffordable, earth-polluting co-dependency on gas-guzzling cars is a culture promoted and edified and sanctified by the zoom-zoom-zoom marketing.

I believe it's time that government leaders at all levels, across all parties, start to truly move into the 21st century. We need to start making the policies and crafting the legislation that will allow us to move into a more sustainable transportation future. That means investing in new futures, making sure that biodiesel and other bioproducts are available to everyone, making sure that we embrace new ideas on how to run automobiles.

[1025]

If we believe in hydrogen cell technology as an option, make sure it's affordable and available to ordinary people. It means making sure that we are looking beyond the next ten years of oil and gas, and instead, planning for 20, 30 and 40 years beyond.

We will all have our cars and run them long into the future, but it may be on soy or canola oil or solar power or any number of creative and earth-loving alternatives. We need to follow the people who are already there, running their cars on vegetable oil, modifying engines so that they can run biodiesel, experimenting with alternatives and embracing a more sustainable future.

[Applause.]

**K. Krueger:** Thanks for that warm welcome, my friends.

I congratulate the member opposite for raising this topic. The automobile industry is certainly capable of rising to the type of challenge she has presented. In my previous life, I was involved in handling claims that arose out of motor vehicle crashes for 20-some years. Then I switched to the area of road safety and loss prevention and wished that I had spent more of my time on the latter instead of the former, because it's so important that we deal with issues such as traffic safety and the cleaner operation of motor vehicles in a proactive way before the damage is done, rather than always trying to catch up after the fact.

I've digressed a bit to even raise traffic safety, but it's still a subject that's very close to my heart. Once the industry got serious about protecting the occupants of the cars they were building, they became very good at it.

Newer vehicles are designed for what's called "controlled crush," where the metal and everything that goes into the fabrication of a car absorbs the energy of a crash and does that in the whole area surrounding the

passenger compartment. The vehicle crushes, and it absorbs all that it can, and at the end of the day, the engine has gone underneath the driver instead of into the driver's lap. The steering column isn't pushed into the driver the way it used to be. The fenders have crumpled all around the vehicle, but often the integrity of the passenger compartment is preserved completely. As long as people are belted in the way they should be, all the benefit of that wonderful engineering accrues to them. The air bag will stop them from being injured as long as, again, they're belted into place.

We were really surprised to find out at ICBC that as the engineers perfected all of this, they even have made glass — windshield glass, for example — part of the structural integrity of the vehicle. If a glass shop takes a windshield out at night and the workers go home for the evening, come back to work the next day and haven't put the glass in, they sometimes find the roof has sagged because the windshield is actually a structural part of the integrity of the car in preserving the occupant compartment.

Engineers who can do those things for traffic safety can certainly also do things to enable the driving population to switch to friendlier fuels. Our government has actually been very progressive about these initiatives as well. There was a conference of the World Electric Vehicle Association this past late fall. The association presented what it calls its e-visionary award to our current Environment Minister, recognizing British Columbia's leadership in alternative energy technology. This is what their president said. His name is Brian Wynne, president of the Electric Drive Transportation Association. He said, "Recipients of this award recognize the advantages of electric drive and have done tremendous work to incorporate these technologies into their communities" as he presented the award on behalf of the World Electric Vehicle Association.

He added: "B.C. has charted a course to become a leader in the use of alternative energy and transportation and an example for other communities to follow." The award recognizes B.C.'s contribution to green transportation, and it was presented at the closing session of the conference, which is the premier North American electric drive industry event.

We were very pleased to receive that award and that recognition. British Columbia wants to be a leader in this area. One of the overarching goals that we have committed to for this golden decade that we're in is the best air and water management and fisheries management, bar none. Controlling vehicle emissions and making them as clean as possible is certainly a part of attaining those goals.

[1030]

As a member who represents a rural riding, I was often perturbed by the former Vancouver city council's resistance to improving efficiency of the Trans-Canada Highway. Their objection, repeatedly voiced, was that they didn't want more cars being able to get into Vancouver. But they seem unable to bear in mind that we call it the Trans-Canada Highway for a reason. We need to have mobility across the country for Canadi-

ans, certainly for British Columbians and for the goods we produce that drive the economy. The economy is still very important as well.

It's really important that we have efficient highways so you don't have vehicles idling on the road and people stuck in traffic jams. Periodically we will hear calls from urban people that ICBC premiums should be set according to the miles that people drive. That isn't a good idea for the interior either.

Thank you very much for raising this issue, and I look forward to the concluding remarks.

**M. Karagianis:** The previous speaker talked a little bit on the fact of the innovation that the automobile industry is engaged in, and of course it's always innovation around how we can crash with less death and destruction on the highway. Again, that lends totally to my opening remarks about the fact that the innovation in the industry should be moving us more into 21st-century alternatives.

Anybody who's a fan of the *Mad Max* movies will know that the future was portrayed where fuel was the money. It showed that we would still be engaged in a battle over fossil fuels. But what I'm talking about today is to promote a new vision of the auto industry in North America.

Biodiesel is used extensively in Europe. In 2004 Europe produced two billion litres. Germany and Austria together have 1,700 filling stations where you can purchase B-100 biodiesel. It is one of the fastest-growing alternative fuels all over the world and even in the United States. In fact, biodiesel can be used to heat your home, could be used to run B.C. ferries and can be used in every application outside of the aircraft industry.

A company here in British Columbia called WISE Energy has been working on trying to develop a production plant for blending and producing biodiesel as high as B-100. I'll be speaking about them more in the coming days, because I think they are definitely a future economic builder here in British Columbia.

In fact, one of the things government talks a lot about is a thriving economy, and part of that thriving economy is for us to look at the future and how we are going to encourage a shift in change from our current practices that we know are not sustainable through to something much more sustainable. Only commercial production stands in the way and creates the only barriers to wholesale adoption of biofuels and other technologies in British Columbia — that is, price and security of supply. Those things can be easily solved. Those are the roles that government can take a very significant leadership in, and in fact this government can build on the building blocks we've already created.

The member opposite talked a bit about some of the sustainability innovations that this government has adopted, but we need to go a lot further. I think we can actually build on those strengths here. WISE Energy and other companies like that need to have the support of government and need to have some good, innovative options for production in the future. That's a role

this government can play, and I'll be pursuing that with members of the other side.

#### SAFE SCHOOLS

**L. Mayencourt:** Mr. Speaker, it's great to be here, and I wish you a good morning and welcome back from the weekend. I am speaking today on the issue of bullying in our school system. This is a topic that I've raised in this House on a number of occasions, and I feel compelled to continue with that crusade, if you will.

I've had the opportunity over the last several years to meet with literally thousands of kids in this province. I've talked to them around the issues of bullying, harassment and intimidation in their school systems. They tell me that they are exposed to this on a fairly constant basis. They tell me that the statistics of one-third of the kids in our school system being affected by bullying — that those figures are wrong and that the figure that really exists is that all of us live with the issues around bullying, harassment and intimidation.

[1035]

Bullying happens in very quick ways. Sometimes we don't notice it as adults, but kids certainly do. One in five kids is bullied in their school system regularly. That's 20 percent. While it's hard to gather complete statistics on this, it is important that we know and appreciate that when we actually engage kids in this conversation, almost all of them have had that issue affect their lives.

When I speak to large groups on issues around bullying, I often ask people to stand up and remain standing if they can answer yes to any of the three questions. The first is: have you ever been bullied? The second is: have you ever witnessed someone being bullied? The third is: have you ever been a bully? I've never had less than 90 percent of the people stand up.

I know that bullying affects a whole lot more people than the scientists, or the researchers or whoever want to tell us. It's far more common in our school system than we think it is: 65 percent of kids have been bullied at school; 12 percent were bullied once or more per week; 72 percent observed bullying once or more per week; 64 percent considered bullying a normal part of school life; and 61 percent said that bullies are often popular and enjoy high status amongst their peers.

Right now we can see some differences between how adults see things and how students see things. The important thing is that 72 percent of the kids say that they see this bullying every week. The incidences of bullying really revolve around three main themes, as far as I can tell from extensive talks with people.

On the issue of racism, most particularly in British Columbia, that relates to folks that are of South Asian descent and people that are of first nations origins. The second is based on sexuality or gender. In the case of women or young girls, it is often the issue of sexual harassment — you know, pinching, touching, calling people names or spreading sexual rumours about

someone. Then we also have this happening in and amongst the boys in our school system as well.

We also have an issue around homophobia. It's a very big problem in British Columbia, as it is in most jurisdictions. But British Columbia has done a lot in this regard. We are trying to do even more with a variety of different things that we can bring forward.

I can't think of anything more important in my whole life than being able to help kids in our school system. I try to do that. That's why I'm here. The kids in our school system are telling me that they're getting bullied. I feel like I have an obligation to bring this to this House and ask other members to consider it as well. I ask them to consider it from the point of view of their own experiences in school. Did you ever experience this, or was it just something that happened that you didn't get to see? I think if we're honest, we'll find that we all answer yes, we've seen it.

The question is: what are we going to do about it? Do we have a role to play in making sure that kids are safer in our school system? I think that we do. I think that we have an obligation, actually, to make sure that kids feel safe, because when they're safe or feel safe, that's when they're going to learn the best. That's when they're going to learn to succeed, and that's when they're going to be able to help each other become better citizens.

B.C. has launched some initiatives like social responsibility in our school systems. It had a tremendous impact on the way kids interact in their societies. It changes the culture in our school system. This is something that we have to go forward with very, very diligently and forcefully and continue to work on, because I think we owe it to kids. I think we owe it to our own history. I think we owe it to our grandchildren that we need to change the culture in the school system.

Bullying is not normal. It is not part of growing up. It is not something that is acceptable, and it is not something that's just a bunch of names and what have you. There are serious costs that children pay in our society today.

[1040]

You know, bullies grow up, and they go to work, and they become bullies in the workplace, or they become bullies at home, or they become abusers of their wives, or they become individuals that commit crime. We have an obligation to do whatever we can to reach those bullies and say to them: "Look. There are other ways to accomplish your goals in life than beating up on people or harming people."

I welcome the opportunity to discuss this issue in this House again, and I pray and I work hard day and night to make sure that this House will do something to ensure that kids all around this province are safe in every school. We have an obligation to do this.

This is not just one of the ordinary kind of political things that we have to deal with in this House. This goes beyond that. This has to do with basic human values, and those basic human values are important to each and every one of us. They are who we are. They make us British Columbians. They make us Canadians.

**J. Horgan:** It is a pleasure to rise and participate in the debate of the motion brought forward by the member for Vancouver-Burrard.

At the outset, I want to commend him for his tireless work in this area. I don't think there is a member in this House — and I look at my friend from Nanaimo — who hasn't been touched by the member's enthusiasm for this subject. I, for one, would be quite satisfied to have this issue raised every couple of weeks in this Legislature, and I certainly will be working with the member from Burrard to advance this issue together, cooperatively — both sides of the House.

We have differences of opinion on how best to proceed in terms of administering and effecting policy change at school districts, but we share a common belief that we should do everything we can to eradicate bullying and intolerance in our school system, in our community and in our society, writ large.

I want to take a few minutes.... The member asked us to reflect on our past, and as I stand here at 6 foot 2, 250 pounds.... I didn't have a lot of problems with bullying when I was growing up.

**K. Krueger:** That's how it works.

**J. Horgan:** That's how it works. That's right. The member for Kamloops-North Thompson is absolutely correct.

But I did have a friend, and he is still a friend to this day, although we did grow apart for a couple of decades. His name was Jeremy Brown, and he came to my elementary school in grade three, which is an unfortunate time to come to an elementary school, because patterns of friendship and alignment have already been established. Kids are already hanging together.

When your name is Jeremy Brown.... This was before the great Three Dog Night song "Jeremiah was a bullfrog," but you can imagine where that went for a new kid who came from Great Britain with a British accent and a school tie. You added the pop bottle glasses, and Jeremy Brown was the obvious target for those that the member from Burrard and I want to bring to task.

Jeremy endured bullying beyond anything that I could imagine. But as a result of that, he became my friend. I would spend as much time as I could, when we weren't in class, standing with Jeremy till it got to the point where he could get a new pair of glasses that weren't as thick and he could lose the school tie. Of course, the school ties are now back in vogue, and he would be a trendsetter, and the accent would lead to probably more adoring fans than ridicule. But in the 1960s a school tie and a British accent wouldn't get you anything but a lot of jokes.

When the member from Burrard talks about personal impact.... Jeremy Brown had a profound impact on me. He was a scrawny little kid. We went right through to grade 12, and when we left Reynolds high school we embraced, I wished him well, and then we went in different directions. But a few years ago I had the opportunity to run into Jeremy, and he is now 6

foot 3, ruggedly handsome. He is the CEO of an info-tech company and doing very, very well — married to a wonderful woman, with two great children. He reflected on his time coming from Great Britain to Canada and thanked me for standing up for him way back when.

I have tried to instil that in my children as well. They're both thoughtful kids, and they're not quite as large as me, but nimble enough to get out of the way of a punch if it came their way — both of them.

[1045]

What I, and my spouse as well, try to instil into them is compassion and tolerance for those in our community. I know that the member for Vancouver-Burrard is doing that every day in his community, and I commend him for that. As I say, certainly I and members on this side of the House would be willing to work with him to advance these initiatives in whatever form they may be, whether it be in a motion or a private member's bill.

I do want to talk a bit about some of the challenges that we face in moving forward with this motion and with any subsequent bill. There are policies in districts right across the province; not every school district has a policy in place. I did take the opportunity to speak with a friend on the Victoria school board, school district 61, here in the precinct, and I have a copy of their discrimination policy. I'll just read you some excerpts from it, hon. Speaker, because there are some points here that I know that the member would embrace and that are, in fact, components of his private member's legislation.

The rationale for the policy goes as follows: "A responsive and safe school environment is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Discrimination is not part of such an environment." Now, we'll all agree on that. I think there's not a person — certainly in this building — who would disagree with that.

Before I get to the body of the policy, I'll thank the Speaker for the time. Again, to the member for Vancouver-Burrard: good job. Keep it up.

**L. Mayencourt:** I thank the member for Malahat-Juan de Fuca. I know that he also has, as he stated here today, a great deal of interest in this particular issue. One of the things that I'm starting to notice around this issue is that a lot of people who have been affected by it are hoping that something will happen to deal with it, so I am very grateful to members of the opposition, as I am to members of my caucus, for the support that they have stated on many occasions for dealing with this issue in our school system.

I want to make a difference in the world for kids in our schools. I don't want to do it for myself. I want to do it because it is the right thing for me, and us, to do. I think that we can make a huge change in the culture in our school system if we would just put a little focus on this issue into the minds of school districts, into the minds of teachers and principals and moms and dads. If we could focus for a little while on the issue of bullying, I think we could really change the world.

I mean that. Back in 1980 or so, we dealt for the first time with the issues around sexual harassment in the work place. Over the course of the last two decades, we have made a tremendous impact, to the point that people in workplaces everywhere in North America know that it is not cool to be sexually harassing someone. This is exactly the same kind of thing that I want to do in our school system. I want to make it so uncool and so un-right to be a bully that people will find other methods for succeeding in life. They will find other ways of getting there.

It doesn't take a whole lot, but it does take focus, dedication, courage and time. It takes, really, a lot of leadership, and there are a lot of leaders in this room here, in this chamber. My hope, my dream, is that one day we will get that focus put to this particular issue and that all members will be able to go back to their hometowns and say: "I voted to make sure your kids were safe." I do hope that we have an opportunity to hear from some young people that the decision we made here affected their lives forever.

With that, I thank all members of the House for listening to me yet again go on about bullying, harassment and intimidation in our school system. Unfortunately, I'll keep talking about it, but I thank you very much for this opportunity to bring it once again to this House.

[1050]

#### RIGHTS OF INCLUSION

**S. Hammell:** I entitled my statement today as "Rights of Inclusion," because I know that belonging or being included is a very powerful human need. Being excluded — and in the worst case, shunned — is historically a feared and very powerful deterrent for behaviour that was considered inappropriate or not socially acceptable. To be included means you're part of the group; you belong; you're valued for your ability, your skills, your knowledge or your contribution.

I have started my discussion on foreign credentials from this perspective, because there are thousands, maybe tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands, of citizens of this country who are not included in the work that they are trained and qualified to do. They are excluded, and the impact to them and their families can be devastating.

First, I want to focus on the most bizarre disconnect these potential citizens first encounter as they engage in the process of coming to this country. To immigrate, the prospective immigrant has to pass a test, meet criteria to qualify to enter — fair enough; done the world around. Besides moneyed immigrants, we want well-educated, skilled professionals who can be easily integrated into the social and economic fabric of our country. We assign points for those skills, extra points for professional education and, I believe, additional points if the skills they possess are in demand.

Now, we know there is a critical shortage in certain fields now, and all predictions suggest that this shortage will appear in all of the professions and trades. But

clear to the public at this moment are the shortages of doctors and nurses and, I suspect, most of the medical professions. So extra points — and swish, through the rabbit hole the new immigrant comes, and into Alice in Wonderland they fall, for they cannot practise the profession that entitled them to qualify to come to the country. They cannot apply the skills and knowledge that have qualified them to come to Canada, because the very credentials that were valued to enter the country are not recognized inside the country.

This is a very serious disconnect between the people recruiting volunteers and the practices of the people within the country. Now, where this tale becomes even more bizarre is that people applying to be credentialed here in Canada are often able to have their credentials recognized in other western countries.

I spoke with a gentleman on Friday night who is an engineer, who trained overseas, immigrated to this country and cannot get his education certified here. He has been able to get certified in the United States but not here in his own country, Canada. He is angry. He is being prevented from doing the work he has been educated to do, is capable of doing and is qualified to do elsewhere, but not here.

There is something seriously wrong. There is more than just the human toll; there are also the costs to the country. The Conference Board of Canada, in its *Brain Gain* study of 2001, estimates that between \$4.1 billion and \$5.9 billion in income is lost annually from under-recognized learning credentials of Canadians and immigrants alike.

The largest group to benefit from the elimination of this barrier would be immigrants. Several studies estimate the negative impacts on the economy due to the valuation of immigrants' qualifications are in the order of \$2 billion annually. One of these studies suggests the real problem is not so much immigrant skill level but rather the extent to which these skills are accepted and effectively utilized in the Canadian workforce.

We have all heard of doctors driving taxis while we cry out for doctors in our hospitals. We hear of nurses wanting to work and who would fill some of the shortages in our ER wards but are unable to get through the credentialing process in a timely fashion.

[1055]

The madness or absurdity of the world of foreign credentials has had the politicians wringing their hands for far too long. We have all heard the horror stories, and now we must act. Immigration under the Canadian constitution is a shared power of jurisdiction. Therefore, the provincial and federal governments have the ultimate responsibility to ensure that the immigration system works for the immigrant or potential Canadian as well as for the citizens of this country.

The regulatory bodies that have been assigned the responsibility of assessing credentials can be national bodies as well as provincial in scope. If the professional bodies find the task of credentialing foreign-trained professionals time-consuming or too arduous, then the governments, both provincial and federal, need to act with a significant political will and solve the problem.

We cannot have the absurd situation where people with the skills we need in this country are moving to the U.S., Australia, Britain, France or wherever, because they are welcomed there and can do the work they have been trained to do. They have left because we did not value their skills and knowledge, and they were not included in our world.

Our country has been built, along with the first nations people, by immigrants and the sons and daughters and grandchildren of immigrant stock. Each wave of immigrants has faced the challenges of being absorbed into our country. We need to do a better job.

**K. Whittred:** I welcome the opportunity to respond to the remarks of the member opposite. I think there's no disagreement in this House that inclusion is certainly a goal of our society and one that we all adhere to for our immigrants. I think every one of us in this House would agree that we want every person who comes to this country to feel at home and feel included in its workings, whether they be at work, at play, in the community or in the school — wherever.

Certainly, to deal more directly with the issues the member raised, there isn't one of us in this House who hasn't had a parade of people from our communities through our offices, telling us their stories about how they came to this country believing they could practise their trade or profession and, in fact, end up either unemployed or underemployed. This seems to be an issue that has stymied government for some years. Although I think we are attempting to make progress, perhaps that progress is not as rapid as we would like to see.

The member opposite alluded to the shortage of workers we face. This is certainly something that we in government direct our minds around, and immigrants are just one of the groups of people that we are going to have to pay very close attention to if we're going to be competitive in an international labour market.

I wanted to take just a minute and look at a couple of ways that we can perhaps be more proactive around this whole issue of credentialing. As a government working with the federal government and working with others, I think we need to find better ways to evaluate credentials before the individuals come to this country so that we avoid the errors and misunderstandings that occur.

If they knew before they came to Canada that they would be able to work as certified or qualified technicians or engineers or doctors or nurses, people would not then be put in the position, once they got here, of having to go through the credentialing process.

We need to understand that qualifications are complex and, again, to be proactive and out in front of that process — to be looking at qualifications, training and certification in other countries so that we have a pretty good idea of what happens before that lands on the desks of people in British Columbia, for example.

[1100]

I think we need to work with the regulating bodies to be sure that they are in fact being inclusive and welcoming in wanting people to add to their numbers.

There is some suggestion from time to time that regulating bodies can be a bit of a delaying process in themselves. We need to be sure we have programs in place, such as ESL, so that immigrants can not only work but can also be part of the larger culture.

I want to make note of one program that has been introduced, called Skills Connect for Immigrants. It was announced about a year ago, and it's a \$14½ million program. It's designed to help immigrants familiarize themselves with the technical language around particular jobs in the workplace. It isn't a broad language program but one that is geared just to specific job skills.

In conclusion, I thank the member for raising this issue. I hope the various institutions can work together to find ways to speed this program up and to be more proactive about it.

**S. Hammell:** Clearly, there is unanimity on both sides of the House that we do recognize there's a problem in this area — a problem that has been around for a considerable length of time. I'm encouraged by the fact that there's a notion around trying to establish credentials before a person has entered the country and a suggestion that the regulatory bodies need to be as inclusive as possible.

We do need to remove any artificial barriers to qualified workers who want to contribute to the future of this country. Other countries have solved the problem, and I suggest that we find the political will to do so also.

I will conclude with a tale of a renowned scientist — and I know I'm not underestimating his credentials — who has been rebuffed by every major and minor university and government agency in B.C. since he came here in 1977. He has thus resorted to forming his own business in order to contribute to this province and make a living for himself and his family.

Before forming his company, he worked at various jobs for between \$9 and \$12 an hour. He remarked: "I'm a scientist first, and when I arrived in B.C., I contacted universities and government agencies specific to my field of expertise in research to let them know I was here and available to contribute in my scientific field."

Even a renowned scientist with over 60 publications was unable to find work in his field. He was unable even to volunteer his time. His offers to do that met with little response. I must tell you, hon. Speaker, that even when I spoke to this person, he did not denigrate or speak ill of any of the agencies he had approached — the universities and community organizations he has been in contact with since he came to B.C.

If we the governing body are not responsible for modelling an inclusive attitude for our province, its employees and citizens, then I don't know who is. I suggest that our universities and government agencies and all those involved in the government's business be encouraged to get involved and to look at this particular group of citizens. I suggest that we dedicate a week for that purpose.

## Orders of the Day

**Hon. G. Abbott:** I call private members' Motion 36 on the order paper.

**Deputy Speaker:** Members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 36 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

[1105]

Leave granted.

## Motions on Notice

### GATEWAY TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (continued)

**L. Mayencourt:** I'm going to take up just a couple more minutes. I ended debate last Monday when we were talking about this issue.

This morning I was watching the news. The freeway, Highway 1 between 176th and 160th, was closed this morning. It was closed because of a traffic accident. A relatively minor situation ended up blocking people from Langley, Cloverdale, Abbotsford — all over the lower mainland up into Hope and Chilliwack — who were cut off again.

I have a mother that lives in Surrey. I go to see her quite often, and I go and visit other members of my family there. I get out of....

Interjection.

**L. Mayencourt:** Thank you. My mother appreciates the visit too, apparently.

Every time I get on 152nd, getting ready to get on to Highway 1 at Port Mann Bridge and what have you, I get stuck in traffic for several minutes. That's not during rush hour. That's on a Sunday afternoon, or that's on a Saturday afternoon, when there supposedly isn't a lot of traffic there.

The fact of the matter is that we've got a choke point, and it's called the Port Mann Bridge. We need to do a better job of making sure people make it across the Fraser River, and the Gateway project is an important part of that.

There are a lot of members on both sides of the House that represent the good citizens of Surrey, the people from Langley, the people from Abbotsford, Aldergrove, Chilliwack, etc. We're all there, and we all have an obligation to make sure that those individuals have access to our highway system to be able to get to work, whether it's to downtown or Coquitlam or in Burnaby or what have you. It's very important that we do that.

We hear a lot of talk about this Gateway project and that it's just going to cause more vehicles to be on the road. Well, that may well be the case, Mr. Speaker, but I'll tell you that there are a lot of cars on the road already. They don't seem to be slowing down, and we very

much need to be sure we can handle the capacity that is coming at us.

We can do that with smaller cars, with more fuel-efficient cars. We can also do something for the environment by simply making sure people aren't stuck in traffic for hours and hours and hours.

In the next little while, other members from both sides of this House will speak about this issue. I encourage them to remember that we have a province where people work in different communities. We've done the best we can to make sure that people can work close to home, but the reality is that there are some needs infrastructurewise with the Gateway project. We should support that, because it makes sense for all regions of our province.

In conclusion, I just want to say I hear in some communities, like downtown Vancouver, that building an extra couple of lanes for the bridge isn't all that good for people in Vancouver. I say that's balderdash.

The fact of the matter is that people who work in downtown Vancouver have to get there somehow, somehow. They can do it either via car or via SkyTrain or a bus or what have you, but we also very much need to be able to provide them with a way of getting downtown and in there.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

I live on the downtown peninsula, and in my neighbourhood I have four bridges and one viaduct, for a total of about 30 lanes of traffic coming into the downtown core. Somehow we expect them to get there over a four-lane bridge over the Fraser River. It just doesn't work, so it's important that members on both sides of this House — because you're representing people and ideas, but mostly you're representing people — stand up and support the Gateway project.

**D. Cubberley:** I seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

#### Introductions by Members

**D. Cubberley:** We're joined today in the chamber by Mr. Gary Rivers and 25 students from his civics 11 class at Spectrum high school, which is not only in my constituency but very close to where I live. Would the members of the House please join me in making them welcome.

[1110]

#### Debate Continued

**J. Horgan:** It's absolutely a delight to stand and participate in this debate on the Gateway motion brought forward by the member for Surrey-Tynehead. Of course, I'm a member from the Island, and I do make it over to the mainland now and again, but as a born-and-raised Islander, I try and do it as infrequently as possible.

Part of it is because of the congestion in the area. I know that when I'm travelling in the lower mainland, I do it with some hesitation as a result of that, so I certainly embrace and endorse discussion on this issue and some practical transportation planning in the lower mainland.

What I'd like to talk about in the time available to me today is some of the traffic challenges we face on Vancouver Island. If we're going to look at a gateway to the lower mainland, certainly that gateway is the Strait of Juan de Fuca into Victoria and the whole south Island.

One of the challenges we have on the south Island, of course, is the Malahat Drive, and many of my colleagues will know I'm tireless on this issue in caucus. Certainly, whenever I get an opportunity to talk about the importance of establishing coherent transportation infrastructure in my community, I take that opportunity.

I'm delighted that I've been given that opportunity this morning to talk about how we can make improvements to my community of Malahat-Juan de Fuca, particularly that portion of the Malahat Drive.

Interjections.

**Deputy Speaker:** Members.

**J. Horgan:** In fact, when I have been asked by members of the media and even members of my community what my views are on the massive expenditure of public resources in the lower mainland for the Gateway initiative, I say that it's only a matter of time before the government recognizes the strength of our arguments — that transportation infrastructure in the lower Island is equally important: certainly, in Malahat-Juan de Fuca, whether it be improvements to Sooke Road, dedicated funding to the circle route into Port Renfrew through the beautiful Cowichan Valley and behind Lake Cowichan and, of course, ultimately, the Malahat Drive connecting the communities north of Duncan to the communities south.

I do believe that the government, by putting forward the Gateway initiative, has made a positive step toward relieving some of the challenges in the lower mainland. I know there will be considerable debate on the merits of the various components.

I would take this opportunity to urge the transportation planners within the ministry, executive council members, to contemplate the importance of transportation on southern Vancouver Island when they're making their decisions.

**K. Krueger:** I want to start by congratulating the member who spoke previously for somehow managing to get Vancouver Island's oar in the water on the Gateway motion, which is really, member, about moving goods and people across British Columbia to markets and to one another.

Transportation is the lifeblood of the economy of British Columbia. A lot of people who live in the cities



— and, of course, the cities tend to be way down in the southwest corner of our province — don't realize that they're forestry-dependent towns, even though they call Vancouver the biggest clearcut in the province.

One out of every six doctors in British Columbia is paid for by B.C.'s forest industry, one out of every six social workers, one of every six nurses and so on, and right across the whole spectrum of the valuable social services the province provides for British Columbians.

We've got to get those goods to market. When transportation arteries are clogged, it really, really matters. We have a robust economy now. Everyone keeps saying the economy is firing on all cylinders, and that's the result of good government in British Columbia, but we've got to get those goods to market.

To us, the Gateway project isn't something that ends at the Port Mann Bridge. The gateway project runs all the way to, at least, the Alberta border, and in many ways beyond.

[1115]

The member for Columbia River–Revelstoke is host to one of the largest infrastructure projects undertaken in British Columbia in a long, long time. The Kicking Horse Canyon upgrades are costing, I believe, member, in excess of \$700 million between the senior governments.

It's an absolutely mammoth project. I've driven through it a number of times to monitor their progress. It's amazing what's being done there and how much money it costs for the relatively small distance that's involved, but obviously, the Kicking Horse Canyon is a gateway to British Columbia. The whole Trans-Canada Highway needs upgrades.

Madam Speaker, the member for Columbia River–Revelstoke and I, and all the mayors who represent towns and cities along the Trans-Canada, and the Members of Parliament, who — happily, for the advancement of this particular project right now — are all members of the governing party, sit on a committee that is urging the new Prime Minister and the federal government to come to the table with British Columbia and build that highway — to upgrade it.

It has far more traffic than it was built for. It's the site of far too many accidents. When we get people across British Columbia and down to the lower mainland, we don't really want them hung up in traffic and unable to get to the west coast.

I always found it kind of amusing how parochial a small group of people could be on the Vancouver city council — the people who were just defeated in the last election — by saying they didn't want the Port Mann twinned, didn't want the highway upgraded because they didn't want more cars in Vancouver.

They seem to forget we aren't necessarily trying to get to Vancouver. We're trying to get the rest of the way across the country once we get to the Fraser River. That's how a lot of people feel about it, and that's the truth of the matter for a lot of the travellers on that highway.

It always seemed ridiculous to me that the bygone Vancouver city council wanted to block the Gateway initiative and block the twinning of the Port Mann

when it is so vital and necessary to national interests, provincial interests and the interests of all British Columbians.

Along the same line of thinking, from time to time I think all rural members, members who represent rural constituents, are mildly amused and quite annoyed to hear urban people call for ICBC premiums to be set according to how many miles people travel. That would greatly impact rural constituents, who work every day to turn out the wealth of the resources of British Columbia to pay for those all-important social programs.

I did a little survey in our caucus one time when we were asking members if they felt sufficiently supported by the resources allocated to them as members. One of the questions was: how long does it take to you get from one side of your constituency to the other? For me it's over five hours, just at the speed limit.

One of our members, the member for Delta North, answered that it took him 20 minutes — and then he put, in brackets, "walking." We live in very different worlds, urban members and rural members, and transportation is absolutely key to us out in the interior.

We do regard, and the Premier does regard, the Gateway project as not just stopping at the Port Mann, the east side of the Port Mann, but as including the Trans-Canada Highway and Highway 5, which runs all the way up through my constituency; the Cariboo connector, for which we've made a commitment to four-lane from Cache Creek to Prince George; the railways; the airports; and the possibility of inland ports to move container goods more quickly.

In Kamloops we've cottoned on to how to add money to municipal coffers by selling naming rights to buildings. Tongue in cheek, I have been trying to encourage people in my caucus to encourage the government to offer the outgoing Premier Klein, as his legacy gift to Alberta, the naming rights to the port of Alberta at Vancouver, if he'd give us a couple of billion dollars to help with all of this and some money in the coffers to get all of this done. Who knows? Maybe he'd go for that.

This is a tremendously important initiative, this Gateway project. I really appreciate the member for Surrey-Tynehead having moved this motion, and I appreciate the wording of it where it says the goal is to open up British Columbia's transportation network to reduce congestion and meet the needs of our growing economy, increase Asia-Pacific trade and meet the needs of our growing population.

Those are all very good reasons, excellent reasons, valid reasons. This is a very worthy initiative that the province has undertaken, and every member of this Legislature should support it, in my view.

[1120]

**B. Simpson:** Jane Jacobs died just a couple weeks ago. If anybody has read her books, she was an icon of public planning and had very strong words to say about adding more blacktop to resolve congestion issues. She would point out, if she were here today, that

if you add more lanes, you get more congestion. It's that simple.

The reality of the situation is that you don't solve congestion with more blacktop. You solve congestion with public transportation, and you solve congestion with strategic planning on where you locate where people live and work and play. I think some people would call that the livable region strategy, which this government failed to take into account when it put forward the Gateway project.

The other thing she would say is that the really critical factor in relieving or dealing with congestion is how many intersections you have. In the case of the speaker before, speaking about the Port Mann, my experience on the Port Mann Bridge is that you actually start moving when you hit the bridge. The issue is coming into the bridge, where you have a merge lane that causes you some grief and causes the congestion.

With respect to what truly would constitute an opening up of the province, I think that one of the things we have to take into consideration is that it's not just the capital costs associated with the project. It's the maintenance costs.

While we do have areas that will require significant capital investment, we also have to take into consideration that we are struggling in all areas of this province, just now, to maintain the existing road system as it is, let alone expanding that road system.

What one could argue with the thinking around this particular project is that it's really 1950s solutions to 21st-century thinking. What it doesn't take into consideration is that we've got two major initiatives happening just now: climate change, and the implications of that; and where gas prices are going.

Even in Victoria, when the first spike in gas prices occurred, one of the first things that happened is that everybody said you needed to double-lane something. It wasn't a road. It was the Galloping Goose Trail, because the Galloping Goose Trail is becoming congested with cyclists and walkers, who are leaving their cars behind and getting into town using alternate means.

I think we're going to see more and more of that. Ridership on our public transportation system is starting to spike. What we have is an outmoded, outdated way of thinking about solving the problem we have with congestion and various other aspects in Vancouver. We also have to think about how we open up the rest of the province. How does the rest of the province benefit from this?

One of the arguments for Gateway is the Asia-Pacific market and opening up the movement of goods along the Highway 1 corridor. Well, an argument could be put forward, very simply, that Highway 16 is the future corridor. That's how you resolve congestion down in the lower mainland.

You reroute that traffic — the bulk of it that's the east-west traffic, which isn't having to stay down in the southern part of our province — to Highway 16 and the new port in Prince Rupert. You make that a double lane, because it's a lane for the movement of goods. We

already have all kinds of communities that are asking for that highway to be upgraded and double-laned.

I've driven many, many times on the Prince George and McBride portion of that. It is a very dangerous highway, and yet, it's a main throughway for the movement of goods. Having both the new Prince Rupert port and Prince George wanting to be the inland port will increase the traffic on that dramatically.

You move the industrial freight traffic to the Highway 16 corridor. You maximize the Prince Rupert port and the Prince George inland port, getting the economic benefit up into those northern parts of the province. You alleviate that traffic from down south and the additional lanes to alleviate congestion — something that the government's own documents say won't last for very long anyway. You move away from blacktop politics, and you move people onto public transportation.

That's how we resolve the issues. That's today's thinking, not 1950s thinking. Therefore, I think what we need to do is to engage people at a different level, to look at this problem differently and be more creative about it. Then we will certainly, at that juncture, have a project we could all support.

[1125]

**R. Lee:** I would like to add my voice to support the \$3 billion Gateway transportation program to open up our transportation network.

Listening to the member who has just spoken, you may have the impression that we are not building the public transportation system, but we are building that. We have the RAV line coming. We are building the public transportation system in the northeast sector of the lower mainland, and we have those SkyTrains running smoothly. We are supporting the public transportation system.

**K. Krueger:** Maybe he can put his lumber on those, eh?

**R. Lee:** We cannot put lumber on the SkyTrain, but we can try to.

We need to move our goods and people across the lower mainland. That's why the Gateway transportation program is very important. We want to reduce congestion. We want to meet the needs of our growing economy. We would also like to set our foundation for the increasing traffic from Asia-Pacific trade and support our growing population. As the parliamentary secretary for the Asia-Pacific Initiative, I would like to stress the importance of this Gateway transportation system. As we know, this year we have 2.1 million TEU of container traffic in B.C.'s ports, but by 2020 the volume will be increased to an estimated number of 8.8 million TEU, so will be a big increase in 15 years.

We cannot build Rome in one day, so we have to plan for the future. The economic development benefit with that kind of increase in volume would be \$6.6 billion for B.C. Those are big economic benefits, so we must be thinking ahead to establish our network.

We know that the Asia-Pacific is very important to our province. This is the only province in Canada next to the Pacific Ocean, and our seaports and airports have the distinct advantage of being the closest to many Asia-Pacific countries. We know that traffic going from Asia to Prince Rupert.... The distance is so short that it would take 58 hours less than the traffic going to Los Angeles when they move from the coastal areas to, for example, Chicago.

I would like to add my support here, and I'm looking forward to having the support of the members from the opposite side.

**G. Gentner:** I wish to address the motion relative to its comprehensiveness, its wide-rangingness and, of course, its ability to reduce congestion.

Regarding the notion of how comprehensive it is, I think we want to talk about tolls. We know about the toll. You pay toll to the troll, and there are good elves and there are bad elves. Is there a troll hiding under the Port Mann Bridge waiting for the traveller, to extort a tariff for use of a road that not only has he paid for but is compelled to cross in order to work and pay taxes every day?

The tax collector is selective where he will set up his booth. The troll is greedy. He is selfish. He is self-absorbed. He's a nasty little guy, and he's miserable because of it. But he wants to appear that he's nice, especially in front of the camera. He wants to put forth a really good image of himself, but he's evil.

Now I'm not suggesting for a minute that the Minister of Transportation is the troll hiding under the bridge, but he is a politician, nevertheless, who can decide who pays and where.

**Deputy Speaker:** Member, there are rules of this House that we do not impugn individual members, so I would ask you to temper your comments accordingly.

**G. Gentner:** Thank you, hon. Speaker. In no way was I here to impugn the hon. minister involved in tolling a bridge, but the hon. minister does decide who pays and where, and certainly, that decision is based on a political decision.

[1130]

The ministry will not tax the users of the Sea to Sky Highway, a gateway to a very special place indeed.

I went to the Surrey Chamber's meeting, February 10, 2006, with the minister as guest speaker. The government's weakness is around tolling — electric tolling with the transponder, the minister suggested. He compared the Sea to Sky with the Port Mann Bridge and stated that because the Sea to Sky had no alternate route that it would not be tolled. The toll minister said that because there was a viable alternative to the tolled Port Mann, tolling would produce savings and the South Fraser perimeter road would be designated to accommodate the toll evaders.

This is one of the weaknesses of the Gateway. It's selectively going to decide which arteries will be tolled and which won't — vis-à-vis the toll evaders are going

to find their way down River Road, through my neighbourhood and over my bridge. There's got to be some equity here, some equity of how we put this new tax on our arteries and all our bridges, because if we don't, it's very selective.

Now very quickly I want to move on to the other part of the motion which talks about congestion. The minister had suggested during estimates that there was no room for park-and-rides along the Trans-Canada before the proposed new Port Mann. The minister stated that there are 10,000 trucks on the Port Mann today. He also stated that there are four lanes, I believe. Well, of course, in 1999 the NDP government turned it into five lanes.

In Delta North we now have over 4,000 trucks a day on two lanes running through a residential area, so this issue is of a fair amount of importance to me and my constituents, when you take into consideration that the real Trans-Canada Highway between the Orient and Montreal runs through my neighbourhood, Delta. I have to put that on the record.

The Transportation Minister during his last estimates stated that there is great congestion and no transit on the Port Mann Bridge, and it would be "almost impossible to think that we could do it because of the congestion." However, there are some things called queue jumpers for transit vehicles that work very effectively.

The minister went on to say: "The member should know that, actually, queue jumpers will not work on the Port Mann Bridge. The reason is that the feeder roads are so congested that queue jumpers are not an option. You've got all the queue roads that are so congested on the Port Mann, it would not make any sense or have any effect. I just thought I'd point that out for the benefit of the member." I quote the minister.

I ask you, hon. Speaker, how comprehensive is the Gateway plan? If the feeder roads into the Port Mann Bridge are going to be congested, we're going to have to fix the fix. So on and on the perpetual problem will continue, and it'll cause greater sprawl. The congestion that we thought we were going to reduce, in the long term will certainly see an increase.

In principle, I support the Gateway proposal, but as it comes down to the comprehensiveness, I think we have to take a greater look, and we have to do a greater amount of consultation with affected neighbourhoods.

**D. MacKay:** I'd like to spend just a couple minutes talking about my support for Motion 36, which is the Gateway motion. The Gateway project is a project to ensure that the province continues to meet the needs for today and tomorrow as we look at moving people and product around our province.

One only has to drive down to the lower mainland, and I refer to driving, to understand just how congested the roads are down here. I would suspect that's probably a mirror image of what we're seeing at the ports and the rail facilities in the lower mainland here.

For someone from a small rural community in northern B.C. but coming from a large rural geographic riding, it's sometimes difficult for me to comprehend

just how congested the roads are. Let me give you a couple of examples of why I find it difficult to understand the congestion. I once had to wait for two traffic light changes to get across Highway 16 in Smithers. Two traffic lights — can you imagine? That's been changed now, but I actually had to sit there for two traffic lights at one time.

[1135]

Driving in the northern part of my riding on Highway 37, it's a 750-kilometre length of road, and I counted 27 vehicles coming at me — 27 vehicles in 750 kilometres. So perhaps you can understand how difficult it is for me to comprehend just how congested things are in the lower mainland. I do see that when I drive down here, probably once a year. I have to tell you: it is a mess.

What we did in Smithers to get away from that two-minute traffic light change that I had to go through the rush-hour minute we have up there.... We have two lanes of road, one going each way. We've now twinned that going through town, and I can actually get across most times by hitting the traffic light right on. If I have to wait, it's only for one traffic light.

What we did was improve the infrastructure. The traffic is moving much quicker now through Smithers. We've reduced the number of accidents and the wait time has improved dramatically. That's what we did to address the congestion we had in Smithers. On Highway 37 — I don't think we're going to see any congestion on that for a long time.

The issue around the Gateway project is to be able to move people, to move products quickly, to get them to market, to increase our economic opportunities throughout the northwest and throughout our province. I stand here in support of the motion put forward by the member for Surrey-Tynehead. I'm pleased to do that.

Madam Speaker, noting the hour and seeing no further speakers, I would, at this time, move adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

**Hon. G. Abbott:** I call private members' Motion 13.

**Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 13 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper. Is unanimous consent obtained?

Leave granted.

#### FOUNDATION SKILLS ASSESSMENT TEST FOR B.C. STUDENTS

**R. Lee:** Today I would like to introduce the following motion:

[Be it resolved that this House support the Foundation Skills Assessment as it provides valuable information on

how well BC students are learning skills necessary to succeed in life.]

I hope members from both sides of the House will support this motion. What is the foundation skills assessment, FSA? FSA is a set of tests taken by grade four and grade seven students in B.C.'s public schools and funded independent schools. Starting today these tests take approximately four and a half hours to complete. That is an annual assessment of how students are performing in reading, writing and math. The reading comprehension and numeracy components consist of multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. The writing component consists of first drafts of two writing tasks.

Madam Speaker, the foundation skills assessment is an important tool that has helped us measure how students are doing in school since 2000. Schools and school districts need to know how well students are doing so that they can make plans for improving achievement. Teachers and parents would like to know how well students are performing in important skills and whether the students need support in a particular area to ensure they receive the best overall education possible.

Government and taxpayers are interested in how well the school system is doing and in ensuring that resources are directed where they are needed most. Based on the FSA results and other information provided by students, teachers, parents and principals, school planning councils would have the information necessary to set goals and direct the resource needed to aim for these goals.

The overall majority of B.C.'s parents, and aboriginal parents in particular, support the provincial assessment program because it provides a fair, clear way of seeing how their children are doing in the key areas of reading, writing and math. The foundation skills assessments are carefully constructed to connect directly to our B.C. curriculum, which is the product of thousands of B.C. teachers' efforts and is one of the finest and internationally recognized curriculum programs in the world.

[1140]

Teachers who cover the provincial curriculum will prepare their students for the FSA task. Teachers don't have to teach to the test if the provincial curriculum is covered in classes. The FSA gives a snapshot of the progress of B.C. students in reading, writing and math — key skills that all students need to have to succeed academically.

These tests do not come to us as students' marks in any way, so the students shouldn't suffer from any so-called test anxiety. It is part of their learning process. Foundation skills assessments are provided as an information service, and unlike the high stakes system, no students, parents, teachers or school are negatively impacted by the information.

Last Friday I attended part of the BCCPAC meeting in Burnaby, and in one of the booths I found a display very interesting. It's a computer program which analyzes the FSA data-set to provide answers to questions like: are there any trends in student performance at

the school, district and provincial levels? The availability of the foundations skills assessment data as well as performance-standard data allows B.C. districts and schools to have a student achievement focus that is reliable and valid. I believe that FSA results would be important information for district accountability contracts and for school long-term plans developed by school planning councils.

Over the last five years FSA results in British Columbia have indicated that our school system, our educational system, is doing an excellent job. Last year 79 percent of grade four students and 77 percent of grade seven students were meeting or exceeding expectations in reading. B.C.'s standard for meeting and exceeding expectations are among the highest in the world. We should encourage our students to write these FSA tests between today and May 19.

In 2003 the student achievement task force examined improvement systems around the world. They came to the conclusion that the amount of classroom and provincial assessment is at the right balance in this province. Systems with too much national, state or provincial assessment become test-dependent, and performance on tests drives the system. Systems with too little large-scale assessment lose the confidence of the public because of the absence of independent information about how well the system is doing.

Madam Speaker, I welcome the debate on this motion.

**J. Horgan:** I will only answer this debate briefly today because I'm very anxious, in the time remaining, that we hear from educators like my colleague from North Coast and my other colleague from Columbia River-Revelstoke. I'm only going to comment briefly on the motion and the content with respect to foundation skill assessment testing.

I'm of two minds on this. I am persuaded that performance measurement is potentially a useful tool if the information is collected in a coherent way, it's not random, and the questions on the test are legitimate. With respect to numeracy and literacy at grade four and grade seven, I believe that there could be some net benefits from that.

However, I am not persuaded that performance-measurement mania and the movement towards standardized testing at almost every level in our public school system is a net benefit to student outcomes. I do believe that testing is an important barometer and an important snapshot, a period of observation on where a student is at a particular time, but I'm not convinced that standardized testing, certainly, and foundation skills assessment testing, specifically, is the educational tool that some have argued it is.

Indeed, we find that groups like the Fraser Institute take this data and use it — I would argue and many in the system argue — to negatively impact on morale and outcomes at schools by taking the data and arbitrarily comparing schools from one part of the province to another. I know my colleague from Peace River South.... Students in his district have a wildly different view of the world than mine on south Vancouver Is-

land, because of geography, because of history and because of context.

The exams should be looked at in context, as a snapshot in time, and in that sense I would see some inherent value in them. However, when the data is used for things like accountability contracts and the accountability agenda, I get very concerned about that. I want to register that on the floor today.

With that, in the interests of getting to other speakers, I'll give the floor to the next member.

[1145]

**D. Hayer:** I am enthusiastically supporting this motion by my colleague from Burnaby North because, if nothing else, the foundation skills assessment tests answer the parents' age-old question: how is my child doing in school? Isn't that why we send our children to school: to get a good education and to be sure they are learning at the appropriate pace? This is what foundation skill assessment tests are all about: demonstrating clearly how much a student has grasped, understood and absorbed during their learning curve.

If we don't test our students, how will we ever know if they are learning or if in fact our education system is working successfully? I find it disturbing that BCTF and its president are saying that FSA testing can be harmful to students. How can a test be harmful? All the FSA testing is doing is demonstrating how much a child has absorbed from the instructions given over the years, particularly in the foundation skills: reading, writing and mathematics.

If through this testing, it is found that a student hasn't grasped what he or she has been taught, then we have a basis upon which to improve that child's learning process. Without the FSA testing, we might not know that a student is not learning at the age-appropriate level and that we can therefore set up an assistant to help them. That is helpful, not harmful.

I believe our students — as do as parents — need to know how well our children are doing in school, and the foundation skills assessment tests are designed to do just that, on a level playing field. I haven't had any constituents tell me that they don't support FSA testing, and all the teachers I know and I've had the opportunity to meet with — they are all doing excellent job, by the way — say they support it too.

We have exceptional teachers in our province, so I don't understand why it is that the BCTF seems to be worried that a very few of its members' abilities might be questioned by this testing. If there are a few who are not teaching up to standard, then the FSA testing could even assist the BCTF to help those teachers who may need some extra assistance to bring their teaching methods back up to where they once were.

Therefore, as a member of this House and as a parent, I completely support this motion. Foundation skills assessment testing is a vital, valuable and fair way to judge a student's skill level.

Before I close, all this talk about students and parents has reminded me that this weekend is Mother's Day, and I urge all children, regardless of their age, and including all members of this House, to celebrate

this weekend with your mother. Please let her know how special she is, and while you're at it, don't forget that coming up next month is Father's Day.

Parents play such a special role for our children and in forming the person you grew up to be. So I want to wish all parents the very best, and especially all of our mothers. This weekend have a happy Mother's Day.

**G. Coons:** I rise to speak to this motion. I do want to reinforce that the BCTF consists of teachers from every corner of the province who deal with students every day. The BCTF represents a strong core of teachers who care and have strong feelings about students.

Teachers believe that every child matters and can learn. Teachers' joy in teaching comes from meeting the needs of every student and fostering the love of learning. The FSA tests do not help teachers do this important job. In fact, teachers believe that these tests may have negative effects on teaching and learning.

I have concerns about the FSA. I'm not opposed to large-scale testing at all, such as the FSA. They can provide important information. They can give us information on how well the provincially prescribed curriculum is working; what areas might need support in terms of learning resources or teacher in-service; and what we might need, more or less, when the curriculum is revised.

Some believe FSAs are valuable. They well might be — it depends on how they're used — as long as they are inclusive and not being divisive.

[1150]

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Large-scale assessments such as FSAs are not very accurate for individual results and do undermine classroom assessments. Teachers use classroom assessment information to adjust instruction, to plan further instruction, to evaluate student progress and to report to parents. Teachers do not simply assess students so they have can have a remark on a report card. The main purpose is to support student learning, not to measure it. It is effective classroom instruction that can help a student learn, not large-scale assessments.

What's the impact of large-scale testing such as FSAs? Teachers in B.C. are now seeing some negative effects, and they're documented by researchers. We in this House need to tread carefully, as there's good reason to worry. Published research found strong evidence of a negative effect on testing on a student's motivation to learn.

Even more worrying is that researchers found that the negative effects of large-scale testing were greatest for low achievers. Two studies showed that after the introduction of national tests in England, low-achieving students had lower self-esteem than higher-achieving students. Before the tests were introduced, there was no correlation between the two.

What the ministry and some people may see as a simple collection of data for accountability purposes may have a negative effect on students and the learn-

ing environment in their classrooms, especially in rural regions of the province. I come from a region where the EDI — the early development instrument done by Clyde Hertzman — in the north coast, central coast, Haida Gwaii, Queen Charlottes, Bulkley Valley, Stikine, Nass Valley indicates that the students there are in vital need of resources and are very challenged in the school setting.

The Deputy Minister of Education just recently in his update said that approximately 20 percent of all preschoolers need some form of intervention prior to entering kindergarten, and EDI indicators suggest that many of our most vulnerable learners live in rural areas.

B.C. teachers, in response to FSA, have experienced pressure to teach to the test — ignore important aspects of the curriculum, teach in less interesting ways and spend more time on test practice. They've indicated that they've seen students who suffer from test anxiety — they value tests more than learning, and they lose their motivation.

Another concern I have is how the tests are being used. We have a ranking of schools and a reporting of results and improvements. Don't get me wrong. Comparisons are not bad, but comparing schools with other schools, as the media and especially the Fraser Institute have done, does not help and can cause harm.

I have a press release from the Prince Rupert school district that says: "Lies, damned lies and statistics." They've been pummelled in the school district by the Fraser report, because of such things as the FSA.

In conclusion, I would like to say that testing such as FSAs may have a valuable concept in the education system as long as it is not used to rank students and schools and is not used inappropriately.

**H. Bloy:** Thank you for the opportunity to talk. Noting the time, I'll keep it as short as I can.

I fully support this motion. The previous speaker talked about the great teachers we have in British Columbia, and I agree with him 100 percent. Most of the other stuff he had to say I didn't agree with. In fact, B.C. is seen as a leader, improving student achievements through tests like the FSA.

What is the BCTF afraid of? Why are they boycotting this? Maybe it's carried out in a letter to the *Victoria Times Colonist* paper last week from a professor at the University of Victoria, Paul MacRae. I'll just read just a bit of it: "University of Victoria students finished their exams last week in English, a subject I've had the privilege of teaching at UVic since last fall. Many first-year students will not do as well as they should because coming into university, their literacy skills were — and here, one searches for the right word — let's say, underdeveloped."

The whole letter is available on the Internet, but I just wanted to say that I support this motion. Testing is very important. It's part of the curriculum that's taught in British Columbia, so why would anybody be opposed to it? Only if they're not teaching the curriculum.

[1155]

**N. Macdonald:** I'll try to keep my points as concise as possible. As a principal I administered the FSA test.

There are just a couple of points I'd like to share with the mover of the motion.

It is one tool. It is, however, a small part of a range of tools that are used constantly in the classroom. The problem comes primarily when the data is used to reach conclusions that are just inappropriate for the data that is gathered. I'll give you a few examples. There are many, but I'll try to use one that the member for Burnaby North would be familiar with.

The member has a master's in applied mathematics and, I know, worked as a research mathematician, so I'll give an example from the math FSA tests. It goes like this. This is from the foundation test for grade four: "What fraction of the letters in the word Vancouver are consonants?" Then it gives a series of fractions that the students can choose from. Part of that question is related not only to mathematics but also to English, so the student would also have to know what the word "consonant" means to be able to answer it. The whole test is like that.

The second test, which is on numeracy, is this: "There are 55 grade four students. It costs \$3 for each student to go to the park. If four students pay, the fifth student is free. How many students will get in free?" While they are testing numeracy, they are also testing English. It is what it is: a very narrow test, testing one particular aspect. Now, it is still valid to do that — and all the tests are the same — but you have to make sure you do not reach conclusions that have nothing to do with the thing you're testing. That's the problem.

The problem comes if the results are misused. The member for Surrey-Tynehead sort of exemplified that in that he thought you could reach conclusions on a school or the school system or a teacher based upon a particular test, and you can't. The example of the Fraser Institute — the Fraser Institute misuses data all of the time. I can give you an example from the former minister Christy Clark, who made a decision on funding based upon a result from FSA literacy tests that were so limited that if you knew how the test was administered and what it actually meant, you would see that the conclusion the

minister reached was ridiculous. There is no problem with the FSA test. It is simply if it is misused.

The final thing is: when you do things like that, you can distort how a school organizes itself, because there will be pressure to improve in those tests. You can do things to improve in the test which are educationally destructive. That's the danger.

I'll just leave it. Thank you for the opportunity. I appreciate the opportunity to raise, and I want to give an opportunity to my colleague here to finish off.

**D. MacKay:** I will be really brief. I just want to say that I do support the FSA testing. I want to give you an economic reason for supporting the FSA testing. I have three grandchildren going through the school system right now. Whenever they come home with report cards, it costs Papa money, because they get such good report cards.

The FSA testing that they do today is not reflective. I don't see how my grandchildren are doing in school, but I do believe that whatever we do in our lives, we have to be measured on what we're doing. All of us in this chamber are measured on our performance here. Our children going through the school system have to be measured to make sure that they're meeting the provincial curriculum. I think it's important that we continue to do that.

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

D. MacKay moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Abbott moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 11:59 a.m.





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