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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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

SECOND SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2006

The House met at 2:03 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Introductions by Members

M. Karagianis: I see today in the gallery a good friend of mine, Rose Henry, a fierce advocate on behalf of persons living with poverty. I'd like the House to make her particularly welcome today.

J. Nuraney: In the gallery today we have students from grades 6 and 7 from Chaffey-Burke School in Burnaby, which happens to be in my riding. They are accompanied by their teachers and volunteer parents. They have come here to learn about the government and the parliamentary procedures, and I request members to please make them feel welcome.

Tributes

E. GEORGE MacMINN

Mr. Speaker: I am in receipt of a communication from the British Columbia legislative press gallery, which I'd like to share with the members. It reads:

November 22, 2006

Mr. Speaker:

We are pleased to inform you that at our last general meeting, the Clerk of the British Columbia Legislature, E. George MacMinn, QC, was made an honorary member of the B.C. legislative press gallery. Mr. MacMinn becomes the fourth life member of the present press gallery, joining former Clerk Ian Horne and retired newsmen Jim Hume and Andy Stephen.

I remain, sincerely,
For the gallery members,
Scott W. Sutherland, immediate past president and acting president

[1405]

Hon. M. de Jong: Point of order. It is one thing as politicians to joust to determine whether we will sit on that side or this side of the House, but to join the dark side of the House, as the Clerk has done, is reprehensible.

[Laughter.]

Introductions by Members

Hon. R. Thorpe: I would like to introduce two visitors visiting British Columbia today, Rhonda Bashnik and Ella Stuart, both from Calgary. Would the House please make them feel very welcome.

D. Hayer: It gives me great pleasure to introduce one of my good friends, Dr. Har Singh. Dr. Har Singh

was a deputy minister here in our province. He has spent more than 30 years working within different levels of government, and 25 of those years were here in our province. He is currently the president of Spark Group Management Consulting, a private sector company providing services to various organizations. Would the House please make him very welcome.

Hon. P. Bell: I didn't think I'd actually have an opportunity to do this introduction, but I would like to take the opportunity to introduce to the House someone who has recently, just two days ago, entered the second half-century of her life — the member for Prince George-Mount Robson.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

AMBULANCE SERVICES IN
CHILCOTIN AREA

C. Wyse: In Alexis Creek on November 11, 2006, members of the B.C. Ambulance Service and RCMP gathered to honour Canada's fallen. In addition, the community recognized individuals and organizations which have assisted in providing ambulance services to the Chilcotin area. The Alexis Creek ambulance station has been closed regularly as a result of staffing shortages. Dignitaries present included Staff Sgt. Larry Wendell of Williams Lake, Sgt. Sean Sullivan of Alexis Creek and Mr. Laurie Harder, B.C. Ambulance Service regional supervisor.

Mr. Harder, along with paramedic Eleanor Cooper, recognized Sidney Harry and Nelson Harry of the Tl'etinqox-t'in community. Their volunteer efforts as untrained volunteers have contributed to saving lives on several occasions over the past year.

Ms. Cooper presented dream catchers to the RCMP of Alexis Creek and to the Williams Lake paramedic station. The dream catcher presented to Sergeant Sullivan is inscribed with the words "*Secanalych*, Alexis Creek RCMP" — "thank you" in Chilcotin — for the members of the RCMP that drove the ambulance to Williams Lake so the lone paramedic could provide the care required. The second dream catcher was presented to Williams Lake unit chief Bob Kopp in recognition of the coverage provided when no other first responders were available in the Chilcotin.

Sergeant Sullivan surprised everyone when the RCMP presented a framed letter from the RCMP to Eleanor Cooper. The letter recognized Ms. Cooper's 17 years of service as a paramedic, often being the only paramedic on duty in the vast Chilcotin area over the last few years.

In closing, I request the House join with me in recognizing the efforts to provide ambulance service in the Chilcotin communities.

DOUGLAS DAY

M. Polak: I will begin with an interesting piece of British Columbia trivia. The smallest statute on the

provincial books is the Douglas Day Act. This act establishes November 19 as Douglas Day in British Columbia. Douglas Day commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the proclamation establishing the Crown colony of British Columbia under Governor James Douglas.

In 2008 our entire province will celebrate the sesqui-centennial of British Columbia's founding. In Langley, since 1946 we've been celebrating British Columbia's birthday every November 19 by honouring our pioneers. From the time of its establishment by municipal bylaw, the celebration of Douglas Day in Langley has developed into a very special community event. The celebrations culminate in a dinner for our Langley pioneers. Residents who have reached their 70th year and have lived the majority of their lives in Langley are acknowledged for their contributions to our community by the mayors of Langley township and city and by other community dignitaries.

[1410]

This year, on the 148th anniversary of Douglas Day, the dinner was made even more special by the participation of Chief Marilyn Gabriel of the Kwantlen First Nation. Prior to singing a special song of recognition, Chief Gabriel recalled her childhood memories of attending Douglas Day dinners with her father, the late Chief Joe Gabriel.

Looking forward to 2008 on behalf of the Langleys, the birthplace of British Columbia, may I wish all in the House a happy Douglas Day.

HOMELESSNESS IN SURREY

H. Bains: I'm standing here today with a great deal of disappointment to talk about homelessness. Homelessness in Surrey, and particularly Surrey-Newton, is at an all-time high. We not only have single people living on streets, but we have families that are homeless. We have women, men, children that cannot even access the food bank because they do not have a fixed address.

Many of these people are homeless for no fault of their own. Today in the House I would like to commend the efforts of Newton Advocacy Group Society for the dedication they have put forth in finding sustainable housing and meaningful employment for homeless people in Surrey.

Project Comeback is an initiative designed to assist homeless day labourers in Surrey to achieve full-time employment and independent housing. It provides the participants with a comprehensive needs assessment, housing, job readiness, placement services, ongoing support and follow-ups.

Project Comeback participants are hard-working, most working between three to four days a week despite the many challenges they face. Many have previously held full-time positions in the mainstream labour market and know what is required of them to maintain full-time employment. All they want is to break the cycle of homelessness in which they currently find themselves.

To really appreciate the depth of this project, you must realize that because these people are homeless, they cannot even have a bank account to deposit their paycheques when they finally find employment. It is a

huge undertaking to get these folks integrated back into society to have them lead productive and sustainable lives.

Please join me in thanking Sarah Khan, Susan Keeping and the staff at the Newton Advocacy Group for making such a difference in the lives of these citizens.

DOUGLAS COLLEGE

I. Black: Last Friday I was fortunate enough to attend the ninth annual Douglas College A Class Act fundraiser. For the first time it was held at the David Lam Campus in Coquitlam. Students from the college's hospitality program staffed the event, which featured a phenomenal jazz band, silent and live auctions, as well as wine- and scotch-tasting for the 250 people in attendance. How can you go wrong with that?

Close to \$25,000 was raised for student bursaries, and guests were afforded a peek at the exciting construction underway on campus. A \$36 million partnership with this government will allow the college to construct a health sciences building and renovate the campus library, opening up new student spaces.

The new state-of-the-art science building is expected to open in January 2008. Once opened, it'll accommodate over 1,500 students who will have the opportunity to help our province meet the future needs for skilled and educated workers in vital health care fields such as nursing and optometry. Beyond the obvious benefit to students, it's a win-win situation for everybody, particularly parents, seniors and others in need — the ultimate beneficiaries of this educational investment.

On another note, I would encourage all members of the House to check out the Douglas College Living Library, the first of its kind in Canada. Now in addition to borrowing books, you can now borrow people from the college library for one-on-one discussions on a variety of topics — everything from Web design to sea kayaking, from stained glass work to mental health advocacy. There's a joke in there somewhere about some skills that we could use in this House from member to member, but I'll leave that to your collective imaginations.

Please join me in congratulating the students, staff and faculty, as well as the boards of Douglas College and its foundation, for the innovative and collaborative approaches they are taking to educating our students and meaningfully contributing to our communities.

DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

S. Hammell: The 23rd of February, 1994, is the day the United Nations passed the declaration on the elimination of violence against women. The General Assembly of the nations of the world recognize the urgent need for the universal application to women of the rights and principles with regard to equality, security, liberty, integrity and dignity of all human beings.

[1415]

The declaration is a document that all of us can be proud of who hold as an ideal a civil society, a society

where women, men and children count and are valued. The document recognizes that violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women. The document describes concern that some groups of women — such as women belonging to minority groups, indigenous women, destitute women, women with disabilities and elderly women — are especially vulnerable to violence.

The document recognizes that violence against women in the family and society is pervasive and cuts across lines of income, class and culture. The document welcomes the role that women's movements are playing in drawing attention to the nature, severity and magnitude of the problem, and the document calls us all to action.

The United Nations and their lofty ideals are a long way from the small province of British Columbia and its four million people, and 1994 is a decade past. But as we have tragically just witnessed in our province, violence against women is not a behaviour of the past, and for many of us, it is much too close to home. So I urge that all of us in the House on this day, the day the nations of the world rose together 12 years ago to declare their commitment to women on this issue, reaffirm our commitment to work toward the elimination of violence against women.

WORLD POLICE AND FIRE GAMES

H. Bloy: It gives me great pleasure today to speak about the British Columbia 2009 World Police and Fire Games. The games see active and retired members of the public safety community competing in traditional Olympic sports such as track and field, swimming and rowing. Here in B.C. our public safety professionals go the extra mile every day to assist ordinary citizens. At the World Police and Fire Games they transfer their strengths to the athletic arena.

Earlier this week I joined with Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General John Les in presenting a cheque for \$300,000 to assist with the travel costs for members of Team B.C. headed to Adelaide, Australia, for the 2007 games. It was an honour to be at this event to pay tribute to our emergency responders, firefighters and enforcement officers.

Looking ahead, the 2009 World Police and Fire Games have been awarded to Burnaby and the lower mainland and will take place from July 31 to August 9. Hosting the games will bring international attention and sporting exposure to our region, as well as an economic benefit of well over \$100 million.

Community pride will also, no doubt, be high. More than 6,000 volunteers will be needed, providing residents with an opportunity to be involved in a major international sporting event. There are many benefits too, but our legacy beneficiaries will get tremendous exposure: the Professional Fire Fighters Burn Fund, the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics, and KidSport B.C. will all benefit.

I would like to close by wishing the very best of luck to B.C.'s 2007 team as they prepare to take the spirit of British Columbia down under. Stay tuned for

more information on British Columbia's 2009 World Police and Fire Games.

Point of Privilege (Speaker's Ruling)

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, yesterday the Leader of the Official Opposition rose on a matter of privilege. She alleged that the member for Chilliwack-Sumas, the Solicitor General, had deliberately misled the House in November 2005 in his description during question period of the powers of the chief coroner under the Coroners Act in regard to administration matters in relation to child death reviews.

A statement outlining the matter, a briefing note and excerpts from *Hansard* were tabled. Today the Solicitor General made his submission. I wish to thank both members for their submissions.

I note that the quotation attributed to the minister does not appear in the table of excerpts from *Hansard*, although it does appear elsewhere in *Hansard* on November 17, 2005. In the matters of this nature, the Speaker's role is to examine the representations of the parties and any evidence presented to determine whether there is a prima facie case of breach of privilege in a parliamentary sense.

[1420]

A review of the documents tabled, the *Hansard* transcript for question period yesterday and the minister's submission today indicates clearly that the minister and the Leader of the Official Opposition differ in their interpretation of the provisions of the Coroners Act and in the administrative arrangements put in place for child death reviews.

In reviewing the briefing note, I note that opinions are presented which could be used to support both sides of the debate. I cannot, however, find any indication that a deliberate misleading of the House occurred.

A difference of opinion as to the interpretation of an act may be the essence of a debate but cannot qualify as a breach of privilege. In numerous Speaker's decisions in this House and in other jurisdictions, it's been ruled that a dispute between members as to the facts does not constitute a prima facie case of breach of privilege. See *Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia*, third edition, page 294.

Accordingly, I cannot find that a prima facie case of breach of privilege has been made.

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT ROLE IN FREEDOM-OF-INFORMATION REQUEST PROCESS

C. James: Yesterday the Solicitor General said he needed time to review the FOI documents that we revealed. Well, he's had that time, and we can see it's clear from his comments to the media that he spent the last 24 hours coming up with empty excuses.

The documents are crystal clear. The Deputy Solicitor General wanted to suppress information because it

contradicted public statements made. The severing was politically motivated.

In the wake of this arrogant abuse of the FOI process, can the Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services explain what she will do to put an end to this abuse to public interest?

Hon. J. Les: The Leader of the Opposition very unfortunately engages in the careless slinging around of allegations in this chamber.

There is clearly a role for staff to review matters that have been requested by any individual in terms of releasing information. Deputy ministers review information to make sure that it's complete and accurate, and any allegation that the Deputy Solicitor General acted in any way politically is, frankly, extremely offensive.

That having been said, the Leader of the Opposition, apparently, has been in receipt of that information for some three weeks. If she actually is as convinced as she claims to be that this breach occurred, then I'm wondering why she did not immediately file a complaint with the freedom-of-information commissioner. I'm wondering if she has done that today.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition has a supplemental.

C. James: I would have been happy to raise this subject three weeks ago, if the House had been sitting three weeks ago. In fact, this is the very first opportunity we've had to bring the information directly to the minister so he has to answer to the public.

I'd like to share a quote: "Open government is the hallmark of free and democratic societies." Another quote: "Government should facilitate access, not obstruct it." Those are the words of this Premier on July 22, 1998, about freedom of information.

[1425]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

C. James: It is clear now, in 2006, that this government has been caught red-handed manipulating FOI for their political purposes.

The Solicitor General told the media today not to worry, that FOI staff consult widely and far. He said it was necessary to ensure that the information was "accurate and appropriate."

My question is to the Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services. Do those consultations routinely involve political appointees who serve at the pleasure of the Premier?

Hon. J. Les: Again, it is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition continues to impugn the reputation of hard-working civil servants who carry out the intent of legislation every day in British Columbia.

With respect to her allegation that this is the first opportunity she has had to present this information, it

clearly is not. I would challenge her to make those allegations outside of this House, in the first place.

It is clear that if she has complaints with respect to the release of information under the Freedom of Information Act, she can do so any day of the week, any week of the month, any month of the year, to the freedom-of-information commissioner. She does not need to wait for this House to sit to make those allegations.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a further supplemental.

C. James: I would tell the minister not to worry. We will be following through with that. Thank you very much for the advice.

Another quote: "Government information belongs to the people, not government." Again, the words of the Premier. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this government is too....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members from both sides, let's hear the question.

C. James: Clearly, this government is actually too arrogant to believe those words now. In a package sent mistakenly to the opposition, there was an internal tracking document. It showed that the FOI was "hand-delivered to the public affairs bureau, to Karen Johnston, for her approval."

Can the Minister of Labour and Citizens' Services explain what — and using the words from the minister — accurate and appropriate insight a partisan public affairs bureau appointee has that warrants FOI approval processes?

Hon. J. Les: First of all, I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition has taken my advice and will be, in fact, filing that complaint with the freedom-of-information commissioner — three weeks late, mind you. But in fact, she has assured this House today that she is going to do that.

It is clear that when there is a freedom-of-information request, that information needs to be supplied accurately and completely. In the process of doing that, it's no surprise that a number of people need to be consulted. We make sure that we comply in every way with the provisions of the freedom-of-information legislation.

FREEDOM-OF-INFORMATION REQUEST FOR HUGHES REVIEW DOCUMENTS

M. Karagianis: Well, the cover-ups are ongoing. After the release of the Hughes report, the opposition filed a freedom-of-information request for access to documents related to that review. Those documents were stored at the B.C. Archives, and we were approved for a research agreement to access them. Both the provincial archivist and a Provincial Court judge ruled that our access to the documents was in the public interest.

That access agreement extended for two years, into 2008. However, on November 6 we received a letter from the archives stating that the documents had been

transferred to the Ministry of Children and Family Development, rendering our research agreement null and void.

[1430]

My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, who is responsible for the archives: why have these documents been moved from the B.C. Archives, and why, despite a court order, has this opposition been denied access to those documents?

Hon. T. Christensen: As this House knows, Mr. Hughes conducted a thorough review, which is in the public domain. In the course of conducting that review, he met with many individuals, whom he assured that their evidence, the information they provided, would be held in confidence. We want to ensure that that in fact is what is done.

If the member has any concerns in terms of release of information, the member has a very simple and thorough process that she can follow, and that is to contact the freedom-of-information and protection-of-privacy commissioner. All information will be released in accordance with that act.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

M. Karagianis: Yes, I do. The opposition has learned that, in fact, Judge Ted Hughes requested that his files be placed in the B.C. Archives. However, now we see that the Ministry of Children and Family Development has recalled those. This suppression of information goes against the spirit of the Hughes report and everything that he tried to accomplish.

Will the Minister of Children and Family Development explain why they have taken these files back out of the archives? In fact, will he commit today to release those under the prearranged agreement that we have, a two-year agreement that was passed by a court judge here in the province of B.C.?

Hon. T. Christensen: It's not my commitment to make. I don't control whether or not the member has access to documents under control of the government. There are privacy protections to be upheld under the information and privacy legislation. The member is at liberty to apply for those documents. The act will be applied accordingly, and those documents that may be released to the member while protecting the privacy of individuals will be done so in accordance with the act.

Our interest is to ensure that Mr. Hughes's word is upheld in terms of the assurance of confidentiality that he gave to people who participated in the investigation. I would hope that the members opposite would want to encourage people to cooperate in investigations such that if they were assured that their testimony would be held in confidence, that would be upheld. That is what the act allows. That is what I am certainly supporting.

J. Kwan: Someone pulled the records back over a court order. The question is: who?

Hon. T. Christensen: The records are being held in accordance with the information and privacy legislation in the province. If the members have concerns about that, they have the Information and Privacy Commissioner who they can contact.

They're suggesting there has been a breach of a court order, where there are a number of remedies that can be pursued by the opposition. I would encourage them to pursue the remedies available to them. We are acting in accordance with the legislation to ensure that privacy information is protected, as the legislation contemplates.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES

A. Dix: My question is to the Minister of Health. Barbara Gosling of Williams Lake needs back surgery. She's in chronic pain, but she can't get an appointment to see the appropriate surgeon until February of 2008 — unless, of course, she's got cash. For \$350 she can see the same surgeon at a private facility in a matter of weeks.

Can the Minister of Health explain why \$350 gets you to the head of the line to see a back surgeon?

Hon. G. Abbott: I was advised approximately 90 minutes ago about the case of Barbara Gosling. It is a case that does cause me very considerable concern if the allegations are well-founded. If the allegations are well-founded, then the actions that were undertaken by the medical practitioner in question were both highly inappropriate and contrary to the provisions of the Medicare Protection Act.

[1435]

Given that situation, given the concern and gravity around that, I have asked my assistant deputy minister, Mr. Craig Knight, to take up this issue with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which is the appropriate body to deal with this matter. I'm advised that Mr. Knight has called them, and the case will be examined.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

A. Dix: I appreciate very much the minister's response. Clearly, this situation has been going on there for some time. In fact, there's a sign in the physician's office that recommends the option of going to a private clinic.

I want to ask the minister to react to this as quickly as possible. It's a serious situation, and it's not just a serious situation because of the Medicare Protection Act. It's a serious situation for all of us in the distribution of health care in British Columbia. If you were offered special treatment for medically necessary care in British Columbia in a matter of weeks or a matter of years, depending on whether or not you pay a fee, I'd say to the hon. minister that that's not just violating the Medicare Protection Act. That's violating standards of decency in our province.

I want to ask the minister when, with respect to the MRI question, there will be a response and a report. I'm sure that he is prepared and happy to let us know when the report that he was supposed to bring forward some months ago, launched in September, will come

forward. And how long will we expect to hear with respect to this matter and, in particular, Ms. Gosling will have to wait for an answer in this matter?

Hon. G. Abbott: In respect to the first matter raised by the member, the case of Barbara Gosling, let me say again that I learned of this case about 90 minutes ago. I immediately called the assistant deputy minister and asked him to take up this matter with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, which, as the member knows, is the appropriate governing body in respect of these matters.

If the member is familiar with this situation, as he says, being on for some time, I certainly would appreciate the member bringing that information forward. This is the first time I have heard from this member that this situation may have been going on for some time. If it has been, I'd appreciate him advancing the evidence in respect of these things. So I look forward to that.

In respect to the second matter raised by the member around the use of MRI machines at St. Paul's Hospital for purposes beyond the purview of the Medicare Protection Act and the Canada Health Act, I'm pleased to advise the member that we are nearing conclusion of that work. It is a complex piece of work. I understand that the cases, in fact, go back into the 1990s. We look forward to the conclusion of that in a timely way.

CERTIFICATION OF HOME INSPECTORS

D. Thorne: In March 2006 the Housing Minister stated that there are no provincial requirements to certify home inspectors in this province, but that action to protect homebuyers would be taken before the end of the year. In a meeting with the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors of British Columbia in September 2006 the Solicitor General said that he didn't think there was evidence that consumer protection is needed in British Columbia. He doesn't think that it's the government's job to provide consumer protection for homebuyers. I'm wondering if the Solicitor General wants to stand by those statements today.

Hon. J. Les: First of all, of course, we are all interested in consumer protection in British Columbia, I believe, on both sides of this House. Now, when it comes to the home inspection industry, I would point out that nowhere in this country does there exist a requirement for licensing for home inspectors. It is an industry that has only been actually out there for a number of years, not that terribly long. But even if they were licensed and regulated, there is nothing to indicate that the performance of the industry would thereby improve. There are many licensed and heavily regulated industries where there are still unfortunate incidents.

I think what is necessary here is some strong public education to make sure that when a home inspector is in fact selected by a homebuyer, they assure themselves that they are availing themselves of a true professional.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

D. Thorne: Indeed, the home inspectors have only been around about 15 years, and only in the last five years have concerns become very obvious to pretty much everybody who is buying a house or a leaky condo in British Columbia. Clearly, regulations are needed. Evidence is mounting. Why, we are now hearing stories that anybody with \$300 and a computer can become an on-line certified home inspector. B.C. consumers deserve more adequate protection than this.

I ask again to the Solicitor General: can future homebuyers in British Columbia count on you to bring forward legislation to protect them?

Mr. Speaker: Just to remind members, we want to make sure we can hear the question.

Hon. J. Les: I'm sure Global Television will be encouraged to know the member has obviously been watching the news.

I reiterate again: public information is what is important here. The member points out that this is an industry that first started to appear about 15 years ago, when her colleagues were in government. Obviously, they did not immediately pounce on this industry for regulation and legislation. There are many human endeavours, frankly, that are not necessarily legislated and regulated by government. Nonetheless, it is important that consumers in British Columbia are not victimized by unscrupulous entrepreneurs or others. We certainly undertake to make sure that British Columbians are well informed in terms of who they should be selecting for these types of services.

M. Farnworth: Obviously, the minister is concerned about consumer protection — so concerned about consumer protection that the Canadian Association of Home and Property Inspectors felt concerned enough to write to the Premier on September 22, 2006. In this letter they say: "Nothing prepared me for what followed. I received a telephone call from an angry minister that if we ever wrote to the Premier again on this issue, he would drop the issue of consumer protection for B.C. homebuyers."

To the minister: is that how public policy is developed in British Columbia — if you don't play by our rules, you don't get to play?

Hon. J. Les: Clearly, what is important here is advancing the interests of homebuyers and consumers in British Columbia and making sure that they are protected. Of far less importance is the advancement of the interests of a particular association.

Actually, this issue is probably more prevalent today because many more people are actually buying homes. There's a reason for that. There were very few people buying homes in the 1990s in British Columbia.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. J. Les: But today in British Columbia, because of a thriving economy, many people are having the opportunity for the first time, and many people are buying for the second, third and fourth time. They're buying homes in British Columbia. Yes, there is a very small percentage of people who are encountering difficulties with home inspectors, and we will make sure that they have the information to make better choices.

[1445]

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

M. Farnworth: At a time in this province's history when people are spending more money than ever to buy a home — they are investing their hopes and dreams and their life savings in that purchase — they should have the assurance that when they use a home inspector, they are going with a quality registered individual. They should not have to worry that their investment will be in jeopardy.

The minister continues to say that he's concerned about consumer protection. Well, guess what. In the same letter it goes even further to say what his views really are. The minister told us that he didn't think there was evidence that consumer protection was needed in this regard.

Ask anybody who ever had a leaky condo. They mentioned to him about getting a resolution unanimously passed by the communities in this province who deal with building inspection, and he said that the easiest thing in the world to do is get a resolution through UBCM.

So once again to that minister: does he truly believe that this is how public policy should be made in British Columbia? If you don't do as he says, we don't give you the legislation that you're asking for.

Hon. J. Les: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member raises the decibel level somewhat, but I'm curious that he would raise the spectre of the leaky-condo crisis of the 1990s. I must ask....

Interjections.

Hon. J. Les: No, it was that member who raised the issue of leaky condos. I have to ask: what did that member do about the leaky-condo crisis besides...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. J. Les: ...hire Mr. Barrett and pay him a bunch of money and, at the end of that process, do nothing? That is what that government did.

Today there are a lot of people buying homes in British Columbia. Thankfully, that is the case because of the thriving economy we have across the province. When it comes to consumer protection, we will take the actions that are necessary to make sure that people can make informed choices.

COMPENSATION FOR RECIPIENTS OF FRAUDULENT DEGREES

R. Fleming: Yesterday in the House the Minister of Advanced Education said he referred the file on Kingston College and president Michael Lo to the Attorney General for advice. After a report on Kingston was released in October, the minister speculated that multiple laws may have been violated.

Given that the Kingston Educational Group and Mr. Lo donated over \$60,000 to the B.C. Liberal Party — donations made before and after changes to laws regulating private career colleges — and given that until just weeks ago Mr. Lo was a member of a special advisory board to the Premier, can the minister advise this House whether a special prosecutor will be in charge of reviewing this case?

Hon. M. Coell: The member is correct. The study was....

Interjections.

Hon. M. Coell: As I said, the member is correct. The study was referred to the Attorney General. It's my hope that he'll make some recommendations that will help the students.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

R. Fleming: Well, that answer didn't mention anything about whether a special prosecutor will be involved in reviewing this file, so I guess we'll have to ask that question perhaps outside of these halls.

Let me also pick up on the remarks of the minister yesterday. He suggested that in the Kingston College case — one of the reasons he's been evading students for months was because he has no suggestions there — it's an isolated incident, and the public should take comfort in that fact.

Unfortunately, these isolated incidents are beginning to accumulate. In another so-called isolated incident, Barkel Business College in Surrey, registered by the Liberals' new agency, accessed public student loan dollars. Almost three years ago financial irregularities were detected by the student services branch, and an audit was begun.

Can the minister confirm, in the case of Barkel College, that he is in possession of audit findings that recommend RCMP involvement? And can the minister confirm that the former operator of Barkel is now involved with a career college under a different name operating today with the permission of the Liberals' self-regulating agency?

[1450]

Hon. M. Coell: I said yesterday that during the NDP's time in government, 45 of these colleges failed, and during our term, some have failed as well. There are over 500 of these colleges functioning in the States, and I suspect that in the future some will fail. What we

want to make sure of is that we have a regime in order to protect students, and we're doing that.

R. Chouhan: Yesterday the Minister of Advanced Education said that the Liberals' self-monitoring agency for the private post-secondary education system has teeth, but apparently they were only false dentures and have no bite.

In the case of Kingston College, international students from India, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, Indonesia and Korea paid hundreds of thousands of dollars for worthless degrees. These students have asked the minister for help, for readmission to accredited schools and to have their visas extended. The students have contacted various consulate offices. The Indian consulate office in Vancouver advised me this morning that on October 31, 2006, they wrote to the minister to ask to help these students but to this date have received no reply.

Mr. Speaker, another 20 students are about to be deported. Will the minister help these international students gain admission at another accredited institute to get proper credentials?

Hon. M. Coell: I have responded to the letter.

There is a \$4½ million fund that is available for students whose colleges close. They can access that fund. They do that through the Private Career Training Institution Agency, and they should contact them.

[End of question period.]

Standing Order 35

G. Robertson: Hon. Speaker, I rise pursuant to standing order 35, as outlined in my written submission to you of this date, to seek leave to move that this House do now adjourn for the purpose of discussing a definite matter of urgent public importance — specifically, the pressing need to ensure that all British Columbians have access to clean drinking water.

This is indeed an urgent matter, because over a million people in this province are being affected by this crisis as we sit here today. Specifically, a real concern should be for the many citizens of this province who do not have the luxury of being able to boil their water.

This government has taken absolutely no action. Philanthropic citizens, community organizations are doing their best to pick up the slack. This is not enough. Citizens in need have been let down by this government, and it is urgent that the House provide direction to allow this to be remedied immediately.

I would point out that because of global warming, the recent extreme weather events will in all likelihood increase in intensity and frequency over the coming years. There is enormous public interest and concern about this issue, and we must debate it at the earliest possible occasion.

Today I believe this meets the criteria of a matter of urgent public importance as found under Standing Order 35. Therefore, I move the motion.

Hon. M. de Jong: Again, I'm obliged to the member for his submissions on the application he brings to the House today pursuant to Standing Order 35.

I will say, as I said yesterday — and some of this will be repetitive — that the standing order contemplates the adjournment of business that is before the House. I will repeat for the record today that the House has actually been recalled to deal with an urgent matter. That is a point that was made at the time that the House was recalled. It was made yesterday; it has been made again today.

We are in the midst — no secret — of a difference of opinion, one that troubles me, about procedurally moving forward with that. But the government views that as the urgent business for which this House has been reconstituted and members are here.

[1455]

Again I say that whilst I in no way question both the import and the motive behind the member raising the issue today, in my view and the view of the government, the urgency of the matter that he has brought forward today does not and should not displace the urgency of the matter that brings us here in the first place, which is the ratification of a recommendation coming forth unanimously from an all-party committee.

I would say, as well, that I heard.... I was going to say "little." I'm not sure I heard anything in the member's remarks to indicate the manner in which the application he brings today would fall within both Standing Order 35 and the subsections 1 through 10, I believe, of the standing order and the test that has been established by this chamber by rulings by various Chairs over the years.

The relevant issues that I would commend to you in that respect relate to the fact that as I said yesterday, reviving a matter that has been canvassed — and we have had discussions in the past around the general issue of drinking water safety — is something that has been dealt with in this House during the past session. The fact, as well, that we are — and the member quite fairly pointed this out in his submissions to you — dealing with matters that may arise as a result of trends in global warming.... These are certainly important matters, but they are also ongoing matters and within the bounds of the tests enumerated and set forth in our rules and the compilation of those rules, *Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia*.

I would submit to you again, Mr. Speaker, that the application must fail and that the business of the House, which I am hopeful we will be in a position to proceed with, should not be set aside and that we should proceed with that business expeditiously.

M. Farnworth: Further to that point, I'd like to remind the Speaker that the issue for which we are called back here will be dealt with on Monday, and that the order of business in this House is pursuant to what is on the order paper. That is decided here in this chamber. So, hon. Speaker, I would ask that you take that into consideration, because that is a most important point that you need to consider.

Mr. Speaker: I'll take it under advisement.

Petitions

Hon. T. Christensen: I have a petition to table, please.

N. Macdonald: I'd like to present a petition from Northern Lights Wildlife Wolf Centre, from Shelley and Casey Black. They are requesting an amendment to section 78 of the B.C. Wildlife Act requesting an exception to the stated rule for the use of trained Karelian bear dog teams for an aversive conditioning technique called bear shepherding. They've collected 6,000 signatures. It's taken them a year to put this together, and I present it to the House.

R. Fleming: I present a petition that requests that the House enact as law the national drug scheduling system, which restricts the sale of single-entity pseudoephedrine and ephedrine products to be dispensed by licensed pharmacists in pursuit of a strategy against the scourge of crystal meth in British Columbia.

[1500]

D. Thorne: I have a petition endorsing removing cigarettes from sale in pharmacies — a petition with 1,312 signatures.

Reports from Committees

J. Rustad: I ask leave of the House to permit the moving of a motion to adopt the report of the Special Committee to Appoint a Representative for Children and Youth for the second session of the 38th parliament, which recommends the appointment of Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafond.

Leave not granted.

Orders of the Day

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

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. Monday morning.

The House adjourned at 3:01 p.m.

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