



Second Session, 38th Parliament

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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS  
(HANSARD)

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SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
**FINANCE AND  
GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**Terrace**

**Thursday, October 5, 2006**

**Issue No. 33**

BLAIR LEKSTROM, MLA, CHAIR

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**SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

Terrace  
Thursday, October 5, 2006

- Chair:* \* Blair Lekstrom (Peace River South L)
- Deputy Chair:* \* Bruce Ralston (Surrey-Whalley NDP)
- Members:*
- \* Iain Black (Port Moody-Westwood L)
  - \* Harry Bloy (Burquitlam L)
  - \* Randy Hawes (Maple Ridge-Mission L)
  - \* Dave S. Hayer (Surrey-Tynehead L)
  - \* Richard T. Lee (Burnaby North L)
  - \* John Horgan (Malahat-Juan de Fuca NDP)
  - \* Jenny Wai Ching Kwan (Vancouver-Mount Pleasant NDP)
  - \* Bob Simpson (Cariboo North NDP)

*\*denotes member present*

- Clerk:* Anne Stokes
- Committee Staff:* Jacqueline Quesnel (Committees Assistant)

- 
- Witnesses:*
- Rocque Berthiaume (President, Academic Workers Union)
  - Frances Birdsell (Skeena Diversity Society; Women of the North - United)
  - Dr. Jannie du Plessis
  - Stephanie Forsyth (President, Northwest Community College; Chair, B.C. College Presidents)
  - Peggy Julseth (Northwest Housing Consulting Inc.)
  - Tona Kivi
  - Rich McDaniel (Councillor, City of Terrace)
  - Joanne Monaghan (Kitimat-Stikine Regional District)
  - Yvonne Nielson
  - Dawna Ottenbreit
  - David Pernarowski (Terrace and District Chamber of Commerce)
  - Myrna Stevens
  - Margie Waldie



## CONTENTS

Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services

Thursday, October 5, 2006

	<b>Page</b>
Presentations .....	831
S. Forsyth	
R. McDaniel	
J. Monaghan	
D. Pernarowski	
M. Waldie	
R. Berthiaume	
J. du Plessis	
F. Birdsell	
Y. Nielson	
T. Kivi	
P. Julseth	
D. Ottenbreit	
M. Stevens	



MINUTES

# SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES



Thursday, October 5, 2006  
9 a.m.

Skeena Room  
Best Western Terrace Inn and Conference Centre  
4553 Greig Avenue, Terrace

**Present:** Blair Lekstrom, MLA (Chair); Bruce Ralston, MLA (Deputy Chair); Iain Black, MLA; Harry Bloy, MLA; Randy Hawes, MLA; Dave S. Hayer, MLA; John Horgan, MLA; Jenny Wai Ching Kwan, MLA; Richard T. Lee, MLA; Bob Simpson, MLA

1. The Chair called the Committee to order at 9:02 a.m.
2. Opening statements by Mr. Blair Lekstrom, MLA, Chair.
3. The following witnesses appeared before the Committee and answered questions:
  - 1) Northwest Community College Stephanie Forsyth  
British Columbia College Presidents
  - 2) City of Terrace Councillor Rich McDaniel  
Regional District of Kitimat-Stikine Joanne Monaghan
  - 3) Terrace & District Chamber of Commerce David Pernarowski
  - 4) Margie Waldie
  - 5) Academic Workers Union Rocque Berthiaume
  - 6) Dr. Jannie du Plessis
4. The Committee recessed from 10:35 a.m. to 10:50 a.m.
  - 7) Skeena Diversity Society Frances Birdsell  
Women of the North - United
  - 8) Yvonne Nielsen  
Tona Kivi
  - 9) Northwest Housing Consulting Peggy Julseth
  - 10) Dawna Ottenbreit
  - 11) Myrna Stevens
5. The Committee adjourned at 11:51 a.m. to the call of the Chair.

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Blair Lekstrom, MLA  
Chair

Anne Stokes  
Committee Clerk





THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2006

The committee met at 9:02 a.m.

[B. Lekstrom in the chair.]

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Good morning, everyone. My name is Blair Lekstrom. I am the MLA for Peace River South, and I have the privilege of being the Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. I would like to welcome everybody to our committee hearing today.

We are touring the province presently. By statute, we have been requested to go out and consult with British Columbians on the prebudget consultation paper, which the Hon. Carole Taylor presented on the 15th of September.

It is our mandate to go out and hold public hearings around the province as well as review written submissions and on-line questionnaire forms regarding what people would like to see in the upcoming budget for British Columbians — what their priorities are, what their ideas are and how we can improve what we're doing in British Columbia.

The purpose of our meeting is to do exactly that. We, then, have to receive all of the submissions and conclude the public hearings by the 20th of October, at which time we will develop a report and submit it to the Legislative Assembly no later than the 15th of November. That is then utilized by the Minister of Finance as one tool in her development of next year's budget.

The format of our meeting today will be that the presenters have a 15-minute time frame: ten minutes for presentation and five minutes for question-and-answer. If your presentation takes a little longer, certainly you have the full 15 minutes. You just would not have time for a question-and-answer period, but we will try to keep it on track with full respect for all of the presenters we have here today.

Before we begin, I'm going to ask the other members of the committee to introduce themselves, and then we will call upon our first presenter. I'll begin on my right with Iain.

**I. Black:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Iain Black. I'm the MLA for Port Moody-Westwood.

**B. Simpson:** Bob Simpson, MLA for Cariboo North.

**D. Hayer:** Good morning. Dave Hayer, MLA for Surrey-Tynehead.

**B. Ralston (Deputy Chair):** Bruce Ralston, MLA for Surrey-Whalley and Deputy Chair of the committee.

**R. Lee:** Richard Lee, MLA for Burnaby North.

**J. Horgan:** John Horgan, MLA for Malahat-Juan de Fuca.

**R. Hawes:** Randy Hawes, MLA, Maple Ridge-Mission.

**J. Kwan:** Jenny Kwan, MLA, Vancouver-Mount Pleasant.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Thank you, members. Also joining us, to my left, is Anne Stokes, our Committee Clerk, as well as Jacqueline Quesnel, who you came by at the information desk with all of the papers there. I encourage you to pick those up and take them.

As well, all of our hearings are recorded and transcribed by Hansard Services. Joining us from Hansard Services are Wendy Collisson and Graham Caverhill — to my far left.

Our committee hearings are also broadcast live on the Internet. We will, upon completion, have visited 14 communities in every region of the province and reviewed hundreds, if not thousands.... I believe we've crested, right now, over 2,000 written and on-line submissions. So it is a pretty incredible job, and I thank my committee members for the work that they put in as well.

With that, we are going to call our first presenter this morning, who is from the Northwest Community College and B.C. College Presidents. I will call on Stephanie Forsyth.

Good morning, Stephanie.

[0905]

### Presentations

**S. Forsyth:** Good morning, Mr. Lekstrom. I want to say that I appreciate your committee coming to Terrace and my having the opportunity to speak with you today. I am the president of Northwest Community College, and this is a position I've held for six years, having lived in various parts of the province prior to this — the lower mainland, Vancouver region.

I'm here today because of my concern for education and training in the province, particularly in the northwest. This region, as you know, is one that has lagged behind much of British Columbia economically, and it is about to undergo, I believe, a significant transformation. Many new initiatives have been or are about to be announced and are under development in this region, such as the international container port in Prince Rupert, the Kitimat LNG, the Enbridge pipeline and numerous exploration and mining initiatives.

As a result, the northwest will need to mobilize all of its resources to build the human capacity required to meet the workforce demands of the immediate future. Our competitive advantage will be the quality of our workforce, and training and skills development are critical for this new, emerging economy.

The northwest has many challenges in developing that skilled workforce. This is a region characterized by higher-than-average unemployment, exceptionally so in our first nations villages. Many are still experiencing unemployment rates in the high 90s, high rates of illiteracy, low education levels and an out-migration of their youth.

In order to build skills in human capital, we must do several things: upgrade the current workforce, including the underemployed and working poor; accelerate the provision of skills training, especially trades training;

meet the learning needs of our aboriginal people; facilitate the application of new technologies; provide skills training that is inclusive of those without post-secondary education; and target particularly the unemployed adult learners with low or basic essential skills.

Northwest Community College is a vital player in achieving a skilled workforce in the northwest. While our role is often recognized, what we need is assistance to leverage our contribution.

I want to talk to you about some ways that I think we can be working together to enhance the workforce here. The first thing I want to speak about is access to post-secondary education. Access is key to building Canada's workforce, and it is key to building the workforce in the northwest, yet access is still being denied to many who would seek post-secondary education.

Last month, for example, we started a new academic year at the college. From the number of applications to the college, it looked like we were going to have a good year and that, in fact, we would have difficulty accommodating all who wanted to attend. But as the first few days of classes drew near, it was clear that many applicants were not going to be able to attend due to a lack of funding.

Various financial barriers are responsible for this situation, including provincial policy which prohibits those on income assistance from attending post-secondary education. This is sort of a catch-22 situation. Those on income assistance are not allowed to access college education. They're supposed to be out there looking for a job, but they can't get a job because they don't have an education. If we are to build capacity in the northwest, we need to come up with policy that will enable this potential workforce to get the education and training they need to work in the northwest.

The complexity of the existing funding systems is also a barrier for many students. Many students are going to three or more community and government offices to look for financial support. For example, many of our first nations students look first to their education departments within their own band. If they can't secure whole or partial funding, they may knock at the door of the Skeena Native Development Society. Again, if they cannot secure whole or partial funding, they may turn to HRDC.

It's not untypical for a student to attempt to access funding support from all of the above and still be unsuccessful or to have to patch together funds from a variety of sources. Of course, at every agency's door they knock on, there are the necessary form-filling and interview hoops that must be endured.

[0910]

There's a confusing myriad of financial assistance types that people are trying to access, and this prevalence of these many different types of financial assistance mechanisms for post-secondary learning adds to the access barriers for many current and existing students. Research has shown that reducing financial barriers in the first couple of years of post-secondary education leads to successful completion and graduation of all Canadians.

This has led our national Association of Canadian Community Colleges to recommend that a new learner support system be created — one that is guided by principles of universality, portability, simplicity, rationality and flexibility; that reduces the complexities of existing funding systems; increases access to post-secondary education; includes grants for the first two years of post-secondary education; and supports bridging mechanisms for the disadvantaged, including those with low literacy skills.

Additionally, I'd like to speak about incentives, because I think that this may hold a key to some of our difficulties in access. I would like to, again, pose a suggestion that I made at the last Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services, in which I suggested that we increase the grade 12 provincial Passport to Education to \$1,000 for those students who attend a rural community college.

This incentive may discourage the out-migration of youth from rural areas of British Columbia and encourage youth to pursue local, less expensive post-secondary options. The issue of incentives, I think, is one that warrants further consideration. For example, the province is providing tuition incentives for medical students to study in the north, but these same incentives are not considered for other sectors. Perhaps this is one area that we should be considering.

I'd like to turn to the issue of infrastructure for a moment. Our post-secondary system must be at the forefront in meeting the changing economy of British Columbia. Human Resources and Social Development Canada predicts that the largest percentage of new job creation will occur in occupations that require college diplomas or trade certificates. It forecasts that 72 percent of the jobs in the future will require some college or university education. To provide that education, colleges must have modern infrastructure and tools in place.

Currently, many rural colleges are characterized by an aging infrastructure and outdated equipment. We need modern equipment and facilities to prepare the northwest's skilled workforce. While I appreciate that these facilities and equipment are extremely expensive and require constant renewal, neglecting the problem is not the answer. At a minimum, a capital investment in the upgrading of facilities and the replacement of aged and out-of-date equipment is required.

Interestingly enough, on the flip side of this issue is the problem of lack of space in our urban regions of the province, while here in the northwest in some communities we are sitting with empty schools, some of which have not ever been opened. Our urban-centric view of the province must give way, I believe. We should look at areas such as the northwest as holding the potential to the problems of overcrowded facilities in the lower mainland.

Just two blocks away from the Northwest Community College campus in Terrace is an elementary school whose doors have never been opened. Yet in the lower mainland I hear my colleagues speaking about the need for more facilities, new facilities and the overcrowded populations they're dealing with.

Another issue I'd like to raise with you is trades training. As you know, colleges are significant players in trades training in the province. Our capacity to provide this training must be increased. Over the past three years our college has increased the number of trades programs that we have offered, but this trend needs to be accelerated. Many future tradespeople are leaving the area to access trades training, and a significant proportion are not returning.

Many employers are faced with a lack of apprenticeship opportunities in the northwest, and they're spending considerable dollars sending their employees away. Many current and future employees are unable to leave the area for training due to an inability to maintain two homes — one for themselves while they're away on apprenticeship training and one for their families that they've left behind.

In the past three years the college in the north has worked with local industry to increase our capacity to offer trades training. This has led to the successful initiation of offerings such as the electrical program in Prince Rupert. But this was only possible by taking existing funds from other program areas and matching industry donations for equipment. The range of trades training in the northwest lags behind all other areas of the province and must be increased.

[0915]

The last point I'd like to raise with you, which is particularly significant in the northwest, is first nations education. This is a primary focus for our college, because we are in a region that serves over 26 different first nations communities. We are unique in that 38 percent of the population in the northwest is comprised of first nations people.

Our first nations communities have unique needs and challenges, not the least of which is access. Many are only accessible by plane or boat. Even though there are many communities accessible by road, public transport is almost nonexistent. For many, the cost of transportation is so prohibitive that they have no reliable, consistent means of access to larger service or education centres.

This population is the fastest-growing population in the northwest. Indeed, first nations youth under the age of 25 is the fastest-growing population. This is evident in our own college, as 40 percent of our student population is of aboriginal descent.

The high school completion rates for aboriginal students are just under 45 percent in the northwest — well below the provincial average. A report from the office of government relations at the University of British Columbia states: "The aboriginal population represents the largest untapped labour force in the country...but to be mobilized, business, government and the aboriginal community must ensure that potential aboriginal employees possess the skills required to perform successfully in future employment positions."

Providing educational services to the aboriginal population requires increased learner's support and funding mechanisms which will support the same. Current levels of student support are insufficient to

provide appropriate support for these and other at-risk students.

I'd like to offer the enormously successful example that we launched at Northwest Community College this past year. It's called the Essential Skills for Work program. This is a program that we offer in aboriginal communities in partnership with those communities. Basically, quite simply, we are providing remedial education, individual education learning plans, career planning and essential skills for work.

We are tapping into a market that has never before attended college, and most of these people are chronically unemployed and older individuals. In the past year we have worked with four different aboriginal communities to offer these programs. We have brought in some of the educational delivery funds, and the band has tried to provide the infrastructure and support to house those programs.

Last spring we successfully reached 65 new adults in a five-month period — people, as I said earlier, that we have never reached before. Those kinds of programs are the kind that we must do much more of. Currently what we're doing is again relying on funds from other program areas to support the delivery of those in those communities.

These are the kinds of models that we need to look at to mobilize the first nations population in the northwest. They require enormous student support. We have elders involved. We have student advisers involved — learning assistant specialists, educational career planners, etc.

It is clear to me that the kinds of funding supports that are required for mobilizing the aboriginal workforce are ones that we have to spend much more time and attention on. I've only highlighted some of the key issues that are challenging the college system in the northwest here, as these are the issues that are the biggest barriers at the moment.

I'd like to conclude with that at this time and thank the committee for their time listening to me and giving me the opportunity to present these views.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Thank you, Stephanie, for taking the time from what I'm sure is a very busy schedule to come out to present here today.

We do have time for a quick question.

**B. Simpson:** I just want to key in on one thing: your comment around Passport to Education as a way of trying to capture some of the students in the area.

I live in Quesnel. One of the things we experience there is that part of the difficulty in retaining your own students is you can't guarantee program offerings across the range. You can't guarantee them a full first- and second-year program offering. It's one of those things where you're forced to go out and say: "If you sign up, we can offer it. If enough people sign up, it might be there."

So it doesn't strike me that simply bumping up the Passport to Education component would do that. Is there a need for us to look at funding rural campuses, to

smaller campuses, to stabilize that program-offering base and then build from there? Is that another possibility for retention?

[0920]

**S. Forsyth:** I think that's another possibility. But the Passport to Education increase that I'm speaking about would not necessarily be for students attending their own college but for a rural college within the province.

**B. Simpson:** Oh, anywhere. Okay.

**S. Forsyth:** With the six rural colleges, I think you would find that there would be a fair array of programs they might take.

**R. Lee:** Just a quick question. We know that right now in high schools across B.C. there are about 4,000 students in an initial program. Colleges are sometimes a bridge between.... If a student can not graduate from high school, they will go to a college to complete their requirements. Is there any collaboration with high schools to promote skills training?

**S. Forsyth:** We have many collaborations with high schools to do that. One of the difficulties with the apprenticeship program in the schools is that the schools do not have the facilities and equipment to offer that training. That's particularly the case in the northwest here.

While there are many high schools that would like to be offering welding, for example, they simply don't have the facility to do that. In the Houston area, for example, we have been trying for six years to find somewhere to offer welding, because that's a trade that is core to many different trades. People can have a great deal of success getting jobs if they have those welding tickets. We've been unsuccessful in finding such a facility, either in the schools or in the community.

Northwest Community College has initiated, where it can, some programs with the schools. For example, in Hazelton last year we, with the home economics department, offered the first phase of the culinary arts program. We are now doing that in Kitimat as well. We're initiating carpentry programs in Haida Gwaii with the high schools.

Where we can, yes, we are doing that. The Terrace and district region, the school district here, has gone to a four-day school week, so on Fridays many trade students are coming to the college, as well as students who are wishing to pursue academic studies. We have scheduled our classes and courses so that those students can access trades training, culinary training and university courses on Fridays.

There are many initiatives underway. Much more is being explored. But again, we are limited by space in facilities.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Again, Stephanie, I want to thank you for coming out and presenting to our committee here today. Have a good day.

Our next presentation this morning is from both the city of Terrace as well as the regional district of Kitimat-Stikine. Joining us are Rich McDaniel and Joanne Monaghan.

**R. McDaniel:** Thanks, Blair, and thanks to all of you for coming. I think I know most of you. I know Dave, and I've known Jenny Kwan for many years. I've been a councillor for 13 years, and I'm deputy mayor for September and October. It gives me pleasure to see you here and to present our concerns.

The forest industry in northwest B.C. has been in crisis since 2000. When Repap pulled its capital from the region, the slide to bankruptcy started. Some 10,000 Repap and contractor workers and employees were out of work. Terrace Lumber Co., the successor of Skeena Cellulose and Skeena Forest Products, is in a very difficult position and may not survive.

The fundamental causes of the forest industry instability. The northwest forests contain large amounts of pulp-quality fibre — some 50 to 70 percent. The forest policies regulating the northwest, although possibly applicable to the interior of B.C., do not allow cost-effective recovery of an old forest. Simply put, our costs of production are too high.

Currently neither Prince Rupert nor Kitimat ports are available for shipment of our products to Asian markets. There is no market for our low-grade fibre, as the Prince Rupert pulp mill has been down for five years and is unlikely to restart.

Over the past 15 years several attempts to rewrite forest policies to create a more economic forest industry have failed. Current discussions underway will have more success, we hope.

[0925]

To address the costs of production, provincial assistance is required. That same assistance has been available to the interior pine beetle-infested forests from both the province and Canada. Roads to Resources is one program that is designed to offset the cost to the industry and is salvaging those forests.

In the Terrace area a \$20 million to \$30 million provincial program over the next three years would accomplish the goals that interior initiatives have set.

First, an intensive silviculture program to manage second-growth stands on these highly productive northwest growing sites. With investments we can create better products in a shorter time frame. The northwest forest industry would be poised to offset the unaffordable downturn that will hit B.C. interior communities.

Second, a road infrastructure upgrade program. Over the past ten years our secondary road systems have deteriorated as the industry was inactive or unable to finance expensive road upgrades.

Third, research and marketing of our unique forest resource. The historic dimension lumber products of the northwest struggle to be competitive with the interior SPF lumber. A concerted effort to develop new products that have added value in new markets will provide the stability the northwest requires. Similarly, economic manufacturing of our low-quality fibre will enable the

northwest to sustain our industry, communities and our workers.

Fourth, a road-to-resource program will enable mineral, energy, and oil and gas industries to develop the known resources of the northwest B.C. The northwest has not received the investment in transportation to the extent seen elsewhere in British Columbia. An infrastructure investment program will unlock the resources of the northwest and stimulate an economy that is lagging behind the other regions of B.C.

The city of Terrace believes that the northwest forest industry has the potential to make healthy contributions to communities in the northwest. Provincial policy changes and financial assistance are necessary to meet the challenges that this region currently faces.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Thank you, Rich.

Before there are questions, if you would possibly like to present, Joanne.

**J. Monaghan:** Certainly. I believe you have some maps in front of you, too, that might help you in some of these presentations. The Cranberry connector, for instance, is on this page. I just thought it would give you some idea of what I'm talking about.

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's my pleasure to be with you this morning and, on behalf of the regional district of Kitimat-Stikine, to welcome you to our area. We thank you for coming and consulting with us. We feel it's a really good precedent to set that you can consult with us before the 2007 provincial budget is put together.

One of the reasons, we believe, for holding these is that we can give you some critical information about the infrastructure that we feel is so valuable in our area and to help our area increase in various things — in resource development and, in the case of the Cranberry connector, of course, also tourism.

The Cranberry connector is a gravel road at the moment, approximately 40 kilometres, and it's located in the Nass Valley north of Terrace. The road is within the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Forests but has supported little traffic and received very limited maintenance in recent years. In fact, if someone was renting an RV vehicle, they'd ask them if they were going on the Cranberry connector, and they wouldn't give them insurance on it. That's how bad it was.

The road, however, is a strategic connection between the Stewart-Cassiar Highway, 37 North and the Nisga'a Highway. The road is needed for resource development, such as forestry and mining; as a secondary route of access to communities of the Nass Valley during an emergency; and as an alternate route for tourists.

In the emergency when the bridge went out up the Nass, that was actually the only way they could get in to their village. So if that's out and it's not maintained, they have no emergency route.

It's worth noting that development at the closed mining town of Kitsault is starting to happen. Also, mining and mineral exploration is in that vicinity. There are

also small hydroelectric projects. That will all place traffic on this road.

[0930]

Tourist traffic is likely to increase with the development and promotion of tourism assets in the Nass Valley, such as the Tseax lava beds, which is the most recent lava flow in North America outside of Mount St. Helens. I would suggest that if you haven't seen it, you should go and see it.

Also, the Cranberry connector is probably one of the greatest circle tours we could have in our area. As you know, the Premier has put his blessing on circle tours.

The regional district of Kitimat-Stikine is one of the many organizations in the northwest that would like to see the Cranberry connector transferred from the Ministry of Forests to the Ministry of Transportation and then reconstructed to paved-highway standards.

We recognize, however, that this is a longer-term project and will compete for limited dollars for road capital projects. In the meantime the regional district does not want the road to deteriorate further. We need a passable road now that can satisfy current demand and emergency needs, and some level of investment in maintenance is needed on an ongoing basis.

For the last several years an allocation of \$50,000 from the Ministry of Transportation budget has been provided to allow a low level of maintenance to be performed on the Cranberry connector. The regional district has requested from the minister that an amount of \$50,000 to be budgeted for successive years to ensure that the road is kept at this minimum standard and that Cranberry connector road maintenance be shown as a line item in the ministry's budget. We therefore wish to inform the select standing committee of this regional priority.

The next issue that I want to bring forth is the Highway 37 North electrification. As you can see on your maps, there are many projects in the north that would benefit greatly from this electrification — many mines, etc., that are either working or that we hope will be working soon.

We had more exploration this year in our area than in many, many previous years. Just to give you one idea, I have a helicopter hiking company. We usually have two A-Stars located here. This year we had seven located here, and we could hardly get them at any point in time because they were so busy with exploration. That's very good for our economy.

The provincial electrical grid in the northwest extends only as far as Meziadin on Highway 37 on the route to Stewart. Further north there is considerable mineral exploration activity and investigations into independent hydroelectric power projects brought on by a hike in commodity prices, high energy prices and government policy supporting alternative energy production.

The interest is very high at present in extending the electrical transmission system further north. The B.C. Transmission Corp. has developed some scenarios and cost estimates for constructing a 138-kV and a 287-kV transmission line to places such as Iskut and Dease Lake that would support B.C. mineral projects such as

Galore Creek and Red Chris and be able to receive power from independent hydro projects. Another scenario was to receive surplus power from southeast Alaska.

It is acknowledged that the cost of any transmission line north would be very expensive — in excess of \$370 million, according to BCTC, for a 287-kV line to Dease Lake. But the cost of inaction may be very high as well.

Responsibility for this project of extending the provincial grid north along Highway 37 is shared among the Ministry of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources; B.C. Hydro; British Columbia Utilities Commission; and the B.C. Transmission Corp. Important considerations are first nations interests, environmental impacts and the desire by the provincial government that a financial contribution for a transmission line come from benefiting mining companies.

The regional district of Kitimat-Stikine is concerned that an opportunity to significantly and positively affect regional and provincial economic development will be lost if the decisions and the dollars needed to extend the provincial grid along Highway 37 North are not delivered. We have sent this message to Victoria numerous times — and I in person to several ministers of the B.C. government.

As there are possible budget implications for capital expenditure on a transmission system extension, we therefore would like the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services to be aware that Highway 37 North electrification is, in our view, an expenditure and an infrastructure project of the highest priority.

[0935]

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Thank you, Joanne. I'm going to look to members of the committee, if they have any questions regarding your presentation.

**J. Horgan:** Thank you very much, Joanne, for your presentation.

I want to focus my questions, if I could, on the electrification issue. You made reference to the various government agencies that would be responsible for funding that infrastructure project.

In the light of the significant exploration that has been taking place in recent years, are there mining companies that have stepped up to the table with private sector contributions for this undertaking? If so, could you outline who they are and how much they've put on the table?

**J. Monaghan:** I don't know how much they've put on the table, but I do know that Red Chris and Galore Creek.... The government is speaking with both of them.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** I see no further questions. Maybe I'll ask one on the Cranberry connector. Have you talked in any detail with your local people or whatever on a cost associated with that, as far as the upgrade and bringing it up to a highway standard?

Would it be \$50 million or...? Has there been any work done on that, Joanne?

**J. Monaghan:** Not to my knowledge. If I might ask my....

Do you know about the costs on that?

Interjection.

**J. Monaghan:** No, I don't think it's been actually talked about. It hasn't been, in our regional transportation committee, and I'm on that. There wasn't any cost on that, except that they did say that \$50,000 would keep it in a situation where people could at least use it.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Are there any other questions of either Joanne or Rich at this time?

I see none, but I do want to thank you for taking the time to come out, both Rich and Joanne. We've known each other a long time, and I appreciate the work you do on behalf of the people of your area and for coming out here today.

**J. Monaghan:** Thank you for coming out and listening to us.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Our next presentation this morning is from the Terrace and District Chamber of Commerce, and joining us is Dave Pernarowski.

Good morning, and welcome.

**D. Pernarowski:** Good morning. Thank you.

The British Columbia government recently announced that the fiscal forecast for 2007 shows that \$900 million in new funds will be available for the budget. This surplus, if used correctly to reduce debt and develop infrastructure across the province, will ensure that we continue to create a climate of investment and growth for B.C. The Terrace and District Chamber of Commerce welcomes this opportunity to contribute to the discussion, and we certainly welcome you to our community this morning.

We firmly believe that the future of British Columbia lies in the north, and it is our responsibility today to plan and invest for the decades to come, to benefit not just us but all residents of B.C. There are three initiatives that need to be undertaken. You've heard some of them this morning already. I'll just brush over them once more.

(1) To develop the infrastructure needed today to access resources and capture the booming global commodity market. Specific projects that would address this access issue in the north include the Stewart-Omineca resource road development, which would open up resources and opportunity to communities from Hazelton to Stewart, Terrace and Prince Rupert. This development has the potential to create significant wealth and economic opportunities in the province with minimal adverse social or environmental impacts.

The 800-kilometre road crescent between Highways 37 and 97 in northern B.C. will significantly reduce access, supply and haul costs, which makes the mining and forestry more financially viable. You've already

heard of the Cranberry connector road mentioned by the regional district of Stikine.

There's also a provincewide demand for power and, specifically in the north, for new mining development opportunities and smelter expansions that will create significant demands for power in our area. The B.C. government must continue to consider the extension of the power grid in the north to facilitate these developments.

Rail line expansion through the resource-rich northern areas of B.C. is another issue that should be a high government priority. To continue growing, we will need to facilitate access to our considerable resources. We need physical access, and we need access from a permitting and regulatory perspective. This must include accelerated treaty and land negotiations with our first nations peoples.

[0940]

(2) To plan infrastructure to ensure it provides a foundation for the future. We need your contribution to ensure that we do not live for the peak of the resource cycle but have a contributing economy that will not only support our families for decades to come but will also become a valuable contributor to British Columbia.

Having infrastructure will help, but the future lies with the global market, and most particularly the Asian markets. The provincial Gateway initiative should be expanded to include the northwest. The constraints to growth now being experienced in the lower mainland do not exist here. Cost-efficient access to markets is needed by all B.C., and we have the potential to provide it.

Your continued support of the proposed break-bulk facility in Kitimat is critical. We need to bring attention to manufacturing in B.C. With the announcement of the Alcan plant modernization, we now have an opportunity to diversify the industrial complex now existing in Kitimat to add value to our existing resources.

The provincial government has been consistent in its commitment to a significant capital infrastructure investment program. However, this investment must not impact the need for ongoing debt reduction. The chamber is recommending that a large portion of the surplus, along with all unused reserves, be used to pay down the debt. The benefit of the debt reduction is that it actually frees up sustainable revenue that the government can reinvest without risking the economy.

Other issues specific to the north that some of this surplus could address are equal access to health care and funding for education that will ensure consistent quality of learning for our children. It should not cost someone in the north more money for access to health care, and our school board should be receiving proper funding to get our children back to school five days a week and also to recognize that there are a higher percentage of special needs students in this area.

To conclude, the chamber feels that priorities need to be continued fiscal responsibility through debt reduction; opening our province's extensive natural resources in the north through strategic infrastructure investment, including roads, power transmission lines and Gateway

initiatives in Kitimat and Prince Rupert; equal access to health care; and a focus on improving the education of our children — the future of British Columbia.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Thank you very much, Dave. I'm going to look to members of the committee, if they have any questions.

**R. Lee:** You emphasize the Gateway initiative and also the bulk port in Kitimat. What is the status of that port?

**D. Pernarowski:** My understanding is that there has been some contribution from the provincial government, and most recently I believe it was \$100,000 toward the feasibility studies of that port. There is a group that has formed to help that process develop. A number of members from our area are participating in that. I think we have a great deal of support from a number of private companies to proceed with that. I'm probably not the best person to go to for that, but it seems to be proceeding along quite nicely.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Quickly, Richard. We try to hold it to one question.

**R. Lee:** What other Gateway projects do you think the provincial government should be supporting besides your port proposal?

**D. Pernarowski:** I think there are a number of proposals, basically, in front of that group right now as far as what would happen if the port did open — what that would necessarily mean as far as the usage of that port facility. Again, I might not be the best person to go at on that, but my understanding is that it's extensive.

**J. Horgan:** I certainly see an extensive list of capital and infrastructure expenditures, and I'm assuming that those would be debt-financed. My question is more to the point that you didn't raise, although it is in your written presentation, and that's the modernization of the Alcan smelter in Kitimat. Has the chamber approached Alcan, in light of the hundreds of millions of dollars of energy sales agreements that they will be able to sign, and asked Alcan if they're prepared to put some money on the table for the electrification of Highway 37?

**D. Pernarowski:** Not to my knowledge have we gone directly to Alcan with that request.

**J. Horgan:** You might want to do that.

**D. Pernarowski:** Possibly.

[0945]

**J. Kwan:** I note in your presentation that you say that while the large amount of surplus should actually go to debt reduction, some of that surplus should also go to addressing equal access to health care, funding for education and also to ensuring the quality of our

children's learning opportunities. To that end, how would you apportion the dollars? Can you be more specific?

**D. Pernarowski:** Well, I was hoping no one would ask me that question. You know, that's the big question of the day. I guess that's why we're here — trying to determine how we split this money out. I don't have the specific numbers.

Toward the education issue, I don't know that the number is extremely large in order to get our children back in school five days a week. I don't think that would necessarily be a large expenditure out of that surplus, if that's where that was coming from.

Perhaps the whole distribution of educational funds needs to be reviewed so that all school boards are receiving the proper funding and so that some school boards in the province aren't forced to make these types of radical changes, if I can call them that, in terms of how we're educating our children.

Specific dollar numbers? I wish I was better at your part of the budget game. Obviously, that's where you're going to have to fit the puzzle together and make it make sense, I guess, at the end of the day.

**D. Hayer:** The modernization of the Alcan plant in Kitimat. I'm just trying to find out: how does the chamber feel about it? My understanding is that they're putting in about a \$2 billion investment here — versus leaving the plant and going backward, right? — which would be good for the long term. I had heard that some people weren't too happy about it. How does the chamber feel about the modernization?

**D. Pernarowski:** The chamber completely supports the modernization of the Alcan plant. I think the opposition that you're hearing is from a very small select group that has some issue toward the distribution and usage of the power. In terms of spending \$2 billion in our area to modernize the Alcan facility, the chamber is absolutely 100 percent behind that initiative.

**B. Simpson:** In terms of the split priorities that you have in here in terms of debt reduction and infrastructure, we're hearing mixed messages all around the province, sometimes in the same presentation. You've also pointed out that we need to find some mechanism to deal with the fact that we're still resource-dependent and still susceptible to fluctuations in that marketplace.

From a rural or resource-dependent community chamber of commerce perspective, what should our priorities be to deal with the debt or to build the infrastructure? How would you define those priorities? Can you do a 60-40 or a 50-50?

Secondly, do you believe it's time that this province starts looking at something like a heritage fund or some kind of thing to help us buffer the boom-bust cycle?

**D. Pernarowski:** I'll answer the second part of your question first. Absolutely, we should be doing that.

Again, the split between debt reduction and infrastructure investment — it may be a little bit of a difficult

one for me to give you a percentage or a specific number. Obviously, the infrastructure piece would have to be financed to some degree — whether it's government, private, a combination or whatever.

I think, though, that the investment into the north right now for the infrastructure portion of this presentation is critical in ensuring that down the road we're going to be accessing these resources and then being able to perhaps pay down the debt at a faster rate. I think the mix has to be there so that we're going after projects that are going to be the most beneficial in terms of economic return to the province, first and foremost. I think we have those opportunities right now, today, in northwest B.C. and in the northern part of the province.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Dave, I want to thank you for coming before us here to present. As with all presenters, whether at one of our hearings or through the written submission process, we will certainly give your presentation full consideration, as with all the others.

**D. Pernarowski:** Thank you. We appreciate the opportunity.

[0950]

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** For our next presentation today, I will call on Margie Waldie.  
Good morning.

**M. Waldie:** Hello, everyone.

First of all, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I'm a teacher. I'm the reading teacher, and I'm quite passionate about what I see as a very urgent need in the province: to teach our children to read in a better way. I'm not convinced that we're doing a good job at all consolidating the reading skills of our young children.

Today what I want to speak to is that population of students that are in that category of learning to read, which is essentially kindergarten to grade 3. I'm not speaking specifically to all the students within that group. I want to speak specifically to approximately one-third of that group that I would call struggling readers.

They're not meeting grade-level expectations, and by the time that we as educators are supposed to have finished teaching these children to read, they're ready to go to grade 4, and now they're supposed to be ready for course content. They're supposed to be reading to learn. We have too many children — I would say approximately a third — that are entering grade 4 and really do not have the reading capacity to handle what's coming their way.

I feel that we can look to some very good research put out by the National Reading Panel in the States. I'm particularly fond of Sally Shaywitz as a researcher, and she will confirm that if you want to get this right — if you want these early literacy skills consolidated in the general population, if you want to raise reading rates and get those literacy rates up — you focus on that K-to-3 band and put your efforts in there.



In trying to get my head around this situation, I asked myself: "Well, what is the situation now?" Educators in the province, whether they're from the public or the independent system, have a job to do, and that job is to address the performance objectives. I'm familiar with them, but what I feel is that these performance objectives, within this learning-to-read range, were published during the height of what I would call the whole language era, which may have served two-thirds of our students well, but that one-third group are struggling readers who need direct instruction, and they need mastery competence in prereading skills and reading skills. They miss the boat. They're not getting them, and they need to get them.

Now, one of the things with the performance objectives, which is the job for teachers to do, is that it gives them a lot of autonomy. It says, "This is where your children should be in story writing. This is where your children should be in literature-reading," but it certainly does not define what we now know from the National Reading Panel out of the States, which is what the little pieces are.

For example, I have never heard any school, any teacher in the province or any administrator say: "Yes, we have our grade 3s reading at 110 words per minute, and we make sure that they're there before they get into grade 4." I don't think this is happening.

[0955]

From my perspective, the performance objectives are very honouring of the professionalism of teachers. And it says: "Here's the job. You have been trained, and we will hold you responsible." But I find that we're in an era of recognizing the teacher as a professional, and we're now very committed to collaborative processes.

What happens, in my mind, is that a child can enter school and have a different teacher who's acting somewhat autonomously, or the child can be in one school district or another that's taken a different collaborative route. The consistency from grade to grade and district to district is not in a good state to support children learning to read.

I see the current state with the Ministry of Education in the province as engaging in these collaborative processes. It's not to say that there are not shifts happening within the system. There are a lot of districts trying to respond to this issue, and they're responding because they're looking at this population of children that are really struggling to read and not getting what they need. They're seeing that the children are becoming resistant to learning. They've got kids that are turned off. They see that the children, at a very young age, are feeling a lot of stress and anxiety. Their self-confidence is kind of plummeting. They become the behavioral issues, and they can become medical patients as well. I think we can do more for our kids. Again, I'm speaking specifically to this one-third group of struggling readers.

Last year the Jeffrey Moore case came about. Jeffrey Moore was a struggling reader who did not learn to read in the public system. He had a school history of going from independent school to independent school. His family brought a case against the Ministry of Education. They wanted to know why Jeffrey couldn't read in the public system.

I'm not here to make differences or bring to you the differences between the independent and public systems, because they're both under the Ministry of Education mandate, but Jeffrey's parents wanted to know where the early identification of his reading problems was. They wanted evidence-based instruction, and they wanted accountability.

This case, in my mind, was pivotal in getting educators in the province to take a shift away from the past educational philosophy of whole language. I'm sure whole language was, like I say, very beneficial for the upper two-thirds of the readers, but it certainly has not done a good job for the one-third of struggling readers.

We're seeing a couple of trends in the province. For example, families with children who are struggling readers are now going to educators or physicians and saying: "What am I going to do? My child can't read. My child is so frustrated. What are the options?"

[1000]

These are the options I'm giving parents. Well, you can hire a tutor for \$25 to \$50 an hour, one to three times a week. You can go to a private business and put your child in a group of one to three and pay a teacher from a private business to deliver reading remediation. You can choose an independent school at the cost of \$10,000 to whatever a year and hope that you might get a smaller class size and more accountability from teachers. I don't believe that's the route we want to go as a province. I don't believe that's the route we want to go for our children.

I want to now bring up the example of what's going on in the States — not that I think that we should go that route, but I think it's wise for us to benchmark and see what our neighbours are doing. You are probably all familiar with the national literacy survey that Canada conducts and then shared with other nations.

When the U.S. got the response from their literacy survey and realized the state of affairs with literacy acquisition, they established the National Reading Panel. I'm a great fan of the National Reading Panel's work and their research. I think it's the best that's available. The National Reading Panel information then became the foundation for the nationally mandated No Child Left Behind movement.

There are various responses to this program in the States. For example, it's top-down. It's not collaborative. There are very specific objectives with prereading skills that teachers have to meet. They're not happy about being told what to do. So there is that issue. But what the program does have going for it is that there is research-based assessment for the prereading and early reading skills. There are instructional materials that are evidence-based and tied into those specific prerequisites for reading. There are also accountability measures in there. I think those are benefits, because that's the kind of program — that structured direct teaching — that I know to be effective in teaching struggling readers to read.

I don't know what's going to happen in B.C. I can certainly sense a shift coming, but I don't think that the independent direction that districts are taking and the

high degree of professional autonomy that each and every teacher has are really the way to address this issue. I really ask: what is B.C. going to do? Are we going to continue with this collaborative approach? Are we going to look for a more directive approach? Or can we really get together and say: "Yeah, we really need to do something here"?

I just want to conclude by saying that learning to read is a very urgent matter in B.C. right now. I would urge you as representatives of the provincial government to take on the task of universal instruction and assessment and accountability for early reading programs in the province. One-third of our children need direct instruction to succeed, and they can and will if we take action on their behalf.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Margie, thank you very much. Certainly, the presentation that you've put forward is one that you've worked on and are passionate about. You can tell. You have used the full 15 minutes. It's our job to listen....

Interjection.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** No, it's fine. Our first priority is to listen to British Columbians.

**J. Horgan:** Could I make a recommendation that we take Margie's presentation and forward it to the Education Committee?

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** You're one step ahead of me.  
[1005]

**J. Horgan:** I was just on the Education Committee talking about literacy two weeks ago — a better place for this, I think.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** That is what I will do as well. We will keep this as a presentation to the Finance Committee, but I think it's important. We will, on your behalf, if it's all right with you, forward your submission to the Education Committee — we have a Select Standing Committee on Education touring the province — and put it into their hands as well.

**M. Waldie:** I would be very pleased if you did that. Thank you.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Our next presentation this morning is from the Academic Workers Union. Joining us is Rocque Berthiaume.

Good morning.

**R. Berthiaume:** Good morning, Mr. Chair and members of the committee. My name is Rocque Berthiaume. I'm the president of the Academic Workers Union, representing the instructors and librarians at Northwest Community College. We have eight campuses in the Northwest Community College region, including Queen Charlotte City, Prince Rupert, Stewart, Terrace, Kitimat, Hazelton, Smithers and Houston.

My presentation today emphasizes the valuable role of Northwest Community College as a community-based organization providing comprehensive post-secondary education opportunities to the citizens of the northwestern region of British Columbia.

The region served by our college is the geographic size of the nation-state of France with 190,000 residents. To put that another way, our college region is the size of a large European country, with fewer residents than are living in the west end of Vancouver. The combination of size and population presents many challenges to us providing education in our region.

The cultural makeup of our region is also remarkably unique, including the traditional territories of six first nations — the Haida, Tsimshian, Nisga'a, Haisla, Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en peoples — as well as our multi-ethnic population from other cultural areas, including people of ancestry from many European nations as well as nations of people who are visible minorities, particularly people from Asia and India living in our region.

We are also a region of people whose economy and employment are based on natural resources, resource extraction and processing, transport, trade and construction industries.

We're also a region of people who have lower rates of school completion, whether it be at the grade 12 level or at higher levels. We also have higher rates of dependency, where people's incomes are often dependent on transfer payments such as social assistance and employment insurance. We're a region that has lower rates of literacy — as our previous speaker has stated — and numeracy as well as, of course, lower degrees of professional qualifications and trade qualifications than the provincial average.

Essentially, our region has been historically underdeveloped with regards to its social and economic institutions. The citizens of our region live in those conditions.

Therefore, while we take pride in building a comprehensive public post-secondary education system that offers a broad range of programs across our college region, including university transfer; nursing; social work; early childhood education; natural resources, including a school of mining; trades, such as carpentry; heavy-duty mechanics; culinary arts; as well as developmental education; and special programs such as our Freda Diesing school of northwest coast art and design....

We work with learners who often face significant social and economic barriers precisely because our citizens live in conditions of having lower participation rates in post-secondary education than anywhere in the province. One of the ways in which we can reach out to adult learners is to adapt our programs as much as possible to meet both their interests and their needs.

[1010]

I'm particularly proud of our school of northwest coast art and design named after the late Haida elder Freda Diesing. It builds on the considerable talent and expertise that exists in the northwest first nations. The program has received national and international recognition and showcases the distinctive culture of

this region. As well, it contributes to economic diversification as cultural tourism takes on a more significant role in this region.

Did you as members of the committee realize that the average age of our students at Northwest Community College is around 30 years old? Many of our learners have gone back to school after maybe losing their jobs in resource-based industries or have decided to go back to school in order to improve their living conditions, their economic opportunities. But often people going back to school at the age of 30 have other responsibilities — family responsibilities.

Many of our students are single mothers, for instance. Many of our students struggle financially with keeping their households intact while struggling to finish their programs. Many of our learners are working people who have been displaced from their jobs and now seek post-secondary education to secure employment in a changing economy so that they can be financially independent for themselves and their families.

However, self-sufficiency is compromised when the rhetoric of self-sufficiency is used to eliminate valuable support services such as entrance scholarships, counselling and support programs. I remind the committee members that in this region of the province, where participation rates are low, those support services are critical.

The more barriers we place between potential students and our institutions, the more we frustrate the opportunities of those in the northwest to reach their full potential. Those barriers are particularly critical for our first nations students. Many of these students require more support not only to upgrade their qualifications but also to complete their courses.

We need to do more at Northwest Community College for the citizens of our region. It's no secret that in our region, sustainable economic growth is going to be linked to our success at increasing skills, talent and education in the coming years.

We know that port expansion in Prince Rupert as well as smelter development and pipeline expansion in the Kitimat-Terrace area provide important economic development opportunities. However, in the past those types of development have typically meant an influx of skilled workers from other regions, effectively bypassing the opportunity for people in the northwest to use that economic development as a stepping stone to higher skills and better employment prospects.

How can we achieve those benefits, as a college but also as a region and as a province, with the people of the area? I would ask the committee members to give serious consideration to the following five recommendations that I believe could make a substantial difference to the post-secondary education opportunities in our region.

(1) Increase post-secondary operating grants to ensure our public post-secondary system has the necessary programs for providing opportunities. I would also invite all members of the committee to visit our campuses. You'll see — if you were to come to the Terrace campus, for instance — that the buildings are really outdated.

There are no real facilities for students. There's no recreation centre, for example.

When I visit the lower mainland, for instance, and go to Capilano College, or if I go to the Island and go to Malaspina College, sometimes it's hard to believe I'm in the same province — realizing, of course, that the economic opportunities that have been captured from the benefits of natural resources have come from this region.

(2) Make our post-secondary system as tuition-free as possible. I really believe that tuition has become a barrier now. The irony is that post-secondary education is a commodity you pay for, and your greater likelihood of having the capital to purchase the commodity increases your likelihood of finishing the program.

(3) Fund and use the post-secondary education system to deliver entry-level and apprenticeship training. I think we're making a real mistake in this province by not supporting the apprenticeship program to the degree that we should. I remember my mother in the 1970s telling me: "Boy, you've got two choices. Get yourself a profession, or get yourself a trade."

I still remember that, 30 years down the road, because a trade is a good skill to have. Trade qualifications in our economy are just as good, if not better, financially than a lot of people who have university degrees.

[1015]

(4) Improve the student grant system in order to increase access and reduce student debt. A lot of people want to go to school, but sometimes they need a leg up, which is in the form of a grant, so that they can start their education. I'm involved in the Freda Diesing school of northwest coast art, and one of the things we've been scrambling with is trying to get funding for people to take the program. Also, when people finish their schooling, they're often left with a large amount of student debt.

(5) Develop programs to assist first nations learners as well as other residents of rural and northern areas, particularly the poor and working poor, so they may achieve greater economic and social independence. Somebody's going to have to explain to me why somebody on social assistance, who wants to go to school so that they can get a degree or get a trade for their family, is also going to be cut off from social assistance for wanting to do that.

We have much to do at Northwest Community College and throughout our province. Together we can increase rates of literacy and reduce poverty. We can increase self sufficiency and reduce dependency. We can increase prosperity and reduce hopelessness. This is the challenge before us.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Thank you, Rocque. I'm going to look to members of the committee if they have any questions regarding your presentation here today.

**J. Horgan:** I wish I had listened to my mom when she told me to get a skill or a trade. I never did that, and here I sit.

**R. Berthiaume:** Yeah, she never said: "Become a politician."

**J. Horgan:** No, although she's not surprised.

I wanted to just put a question to you. You mentioned pipelines and other economic activity that's potentially slated for this region of the province. In particular, in my discussions with Enbridge they have alleged that they're very enthusiastic about local-hire provisions and encouraging first nations participation in that particular project coming in this direction. Would you recommend to this committee that we pursue local-hire provisions in any of the permitting processes that may come forward as part of that process?

**R. Berthiaume:** I would certainly support local-hire processes that are done in conjunction with the organizations involved — the company and the union, if it's a trade union organization. But certainly we're going to see investment in the range of a couple of billion dollars with regards to the pipeline, the port expansion as well as the smelter development in Kitimat.

This is an area which I think suffered greater than many other areas of the province during the recessionary period that we've had. In fact, in our region we still have a lot of uneven economic development. There's a direct linkage, in my opinion, between literacy rates, school completion, your qualifications, and your income and capacity to sustain yourself and your family. I think we need to consciously develop social and economic strategies to deal with those questions.

**J. Kwan:** The current grant program for post-secondary students is such that people may potentially get the grant from the government from the back end of the process rather than the front end in terms of the approval. From that perspective, do you have a comment about that? Do you think the government should actually reverse that process? Instead of potentially letting people know that they'll get the money at the back end, they would actually know in the front end. Do you think that would make a difference in terms of people's ability to attend some secondary education?

**R. Berthiaume:** Yeah, I think so, Jenny. I think the government strategy should be to realize the level of not only capital investment in our system.... Part of that capital investment is investing in people, including the students. If we can encourage students to attend post-secondary immediately by the form of a grant, if we can get them in the door, that's good. If you get them in the door, there's a chance that you're going to be able to keep them.

[1020]

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** We have other questions coming, and we are out of time. It's interesting, and I know that we have two other questioners. We do not have time, but maybe if I could just close with.... Maybe for clarification, a point that you'd made on the trades and apprenticeship training, saying we should

get that into our colleges.... It is today, and the issue is that we have more apprentices in our system than ever before.

I'm just curious. Are you thinking a greater investment is what you're suggesting in that type of training or a broader investment in where it's supplied — that training? I'm not sure what you were referring to.

**R. Berthiaume:** I know you're involved in the trades and apprenticeship program, Mr. Lekstrom. My view is that we should be investing more money in opportunities for trades. I'll give you a perfect example.

What's happening in our post-secondary system today is that, if you take a look at the statistics, there are fewer men attending post-secondary education. If we develop our trades programs, either in our colleges or in conjunction with first nations communities — offering those trades programs on reserve, for instance — that would be one way of capacity-building.

We have a lot of people interested in working in industry, who should have opportunities to get their trades qualifications.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** I want to thank you, Rocque. You raise a great point. We'll close on this — the issue of taking the trades training out to the areas. It is important. I think there are some mobile trailers that are being utilized and implemented now, which is a great idea.

I thank you for presenting here to the committee.

**R. Berthiaume:** I'd like to thank the committee for taking the time to listen to me this morning.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Our next presentation this morning is from Dr. Jannie du Plessis.

Good morning, and welcome.

**J. du Plessis:** Good to be here. Thank you to the committee that they take the time to come to Terrace as well. I'm a South African, a qualified pediatrician, but I've been in Terrace now for seven years. A lot of the work that we do involves children with ADHD, behavioral problems, learning disabilities and oppositional/defiant kinds of problems.

There was a time that I started to work with the school district, meeting with them on the common patients — students. What I soon found out is that a lot of the problems that we see are related to learning disabilities, and a lot of them are related to the reading disability — dyslexia. You've already heard Margie on that, and I fully support what Margie Waldie has brought to you. We should be able to pick up these children before they start to develop problems.

Very often there's a past of family history. It happens so often that when I identify a child with a reading disability and I would talk to the mom about it, it's very clear that the mom or the dad or both had a reading disability or were called dyslexic when they were young.

The fact that we see these children with their behavioral problems just means that we have failed them because we haven't been able to pick them up at

the time when we could have prevented these long struggles that they've had. Very often they are the clowns in the class. They're the ones that misbehave because they don't want to be identified or exposed.

The fact that we then spend so much money on scribes.... I mean, firstly, evaluation. Very often when we don't know what to do with them, we just send them for another evaluation. They get scribes and get laptops and all that, because we haven't identified them early and dealt with it.

Having said that we should identify them early, we must also accept that we have a large group of students at the moment in the higher grades that have never learned to read. I see an eight-, nine- or ten-year-old, and like the mom says, he doesn't recognize his name.

I asked one young guy to just write his name, and when he had to write an R in his name, he didn't know how to do it. His mom had to point it out to him: "This is how you write an R."

[1025]

So my urge to you is that what we sit with is a real major problem that we have failed to address. I think it's long past the time that we should do any pilot studies. The work has been done. The programs have been identified. The schools do not have the funding to deal with this problem. The teachers are not trained. My urge is that this should be done as soon as possible. That funding should be there.

The schools don't recognize the category of dyslexia. It falls under "severe learning disability" because if they recognized it as an isolated problem, they would have to deal with it, and they don't have the funding.

That's all that I wanted to tell you. I see the failures of the system in identifying these children early and in helping them early. I can promise you that by spending the dollars on prevention, we're going to save a lot more eventually. There are statistics out that \$1 spent on teaching a child to read reaps a benefit of about \$7 in the end. These statistics will all be available.

I do feel that the committee should put high on a priority list that we should deal with literacy at an early age and then also the older child. Thank you. That's all that I would like to bring to you.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Well, thank you, Doctor.

If there are questions from members of the committee, I will look to see if they have anything at this time.

**J. Kwan:** Do you have any sense, for the school districts here, of what the situation is for the wait-list for children to be assessed for particular special needs? For example, yesterday we received a presentation advising us that in Vancouver the wait-list for children to get assessed to see what learning challenges they might have is 1,200 students. So if you're waiting, you know, you're very likely to be an adult by the time you get through the system. I'm just trying to get a better sense of what the situation is here.

**J. du Plessis:** I can't give you either numbers or a time line, but what I can tell you is that a child has to

earn an assessment on a priority list, which usually means that they must fail in some way. They are not being screened. What we are promoting is a universal screen to prove that the child can read — I mean, to accept that a child cannot read until we are sure that the child can read.

What we sit with is that these children are very.... They don't want to be identified. For that reason, they very often don't even get assessed. What I have asked is that the school district hand in a written submission to the committee, which they will do, and there you will probably get a better idea.

**R. Lee:** You mentioned that in a school system there are problems in ID'ing the special needs students. Do you think more teacher training on special needs would be helpful? You know, in the system some teachers were not trained with the knowledge of special needs and how to ID them.

**J. du Plessis:** We actually had a meeting on Tuesday with some of the school people. There is a lady who has just been appointed as the coordinator of literacy in the schools. There are many reasons why these students do not get identified, and I think one of those is the fact that our teachers are not trained well enough to do the assessments, firstly, and they don't take the responsibility.

Very often these children are just pushed on, without trying to identify the real reason for the fact that the child doesn't do well. It's an issue that is not only provincewide; it's worldwide. I think we in B.C. have a chance to address it on a provincial level. We need to try to do something about it.

Can I just say this? In the States there was a task group looking into it. There's a developmental pediatrician that was on this: Sally Shaywitz. She wrote a book, *Overcoming Dyslexia*. The bottom line was that all the programs were there, scientifically evaluated. Everybody was doing their own thing. What they did is the funding became available if they would use the correct programs and show the results. That's what I think we should do.

[1030]

We should say, "The funding will be there," but this needs to be done, and it should be done in an organized way. It should be done in the schools, and not outside the schools like they've done at the moment.

**R. Lee:** I agree.

**R. Hawes:** What you're saying makes a lot of sense to me. I'm just curious, though. You mentioned ADHD, and you mentioned dyslexia. I'm just curious what the incidence of FASD here would look like. Is this a big problem in the school district here?

**J. du Plessis:** No, FASD is not a big problem, but the awareness has really improved dramatically, and I think a lot of people have made it their life task to make people aware of the danger. There's a new assessment that's just been rolled out now — CDIBC, which is a complex diagnostic assessment.

FASD is always there in the background. Very often you can't prove it; you don't have the history. Very often these children are in foster care. You just know that there has been some exposure. So it's not a major issue.

Can I just say that the group of children that I really talk about are very intelligent children. They are exceptionally intelligent. They make use of what they call the sea of information, because they can't read. They can read environments; they can read groups; they can read people dramatically well. They can see the problem, but they can't read. This is the group that I really talk about.

**I. Black:** Early childhood literacy and literacy in general is a topic, of course, that really crosses a lot of political, partisan lines. We're all concerned about it. It's a pet issue of our Premier, as you may know.

It strikes me as interesting that you're a pediatrician advocating today on behalf of something, and you focused a lot of your remarks on the education system. You also just referenced another doctor in the U.S. when you were talking about some of the projects they run down there.

My question is: where do the lines cross between the focus on education versus health? In trying to move forward from this point, what cooperation is there between the medical community and the education community? Does this solely belong in the education realm, as you see it? Can you talk a little bit about that? We seem to be crossing over the lines here seamlessly. I'm just curious. What does that look like in the big picture?

**J. du Plessis:** Like I've said, the reason why I see these children is because the school system has failed them. They haven't been identified when they should have to prevent the behavioral problems. The fact that ADHD is.... It's quickly said that this child has ADHD, but this child actually isn't focused because he or she doesn't know how to read. When they have to do work in the classroom, they're always troubling the other children, or they misbehave because they don't want to be part of that.

We see the failures. In that sense, if these children had been helped, or can be helped, then a lot of these children would never cross my desk. I wouldn't be the one who has to prescribe medications for ADHD when the child actually needs some other help.

I think a lot of what we do is educational as well. We meet with the school district. We've just had a meeting with them now. In that sense, that hand-in-hand work is really what needs to be done, and I think it's done on a general basis through most of the communities. It's part and parcel of what we need to be involved in.

I think you cannot say that this is pediatrics, this is medical, and this is school. I think it's one. We are all involved in the youth, in the young people, whether it's something that's behavioral or.... We see reading disabilities as well from a medical point of view, to see if there's any medical reason why they have a learning disability.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Well, Doctor, I want to thank you for taking the time to come and present to our committee here this morning in Terrace.

Just before we move on, I do want to recognize a gentleman who's in the crowd — a councillor for the city of Terrace, Brian Downie. You're sitting through. Welcome and thank you.

At this time our next scheduled presentation is for 10:50. It is now 10:35. I'm going to recommend that we take a recess and reconvene in ten minutes. There is coffee and refreshments at the back of the room. Please enjoy those and visit with the different members of the committee.

Members, if we could be back in ten minutes to begin. We stand recessed.

The committee recessed from 10:35 a.m. to 10:50 a.m.

[B. Lekstrom in the chair.]

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Our next presentation this morning is from the Skeena Diversity Society; Women of the North – United. Joining us is Frances Birdsell.

Good morning and welcome. I note that our members are quickly rushing back in. We extended that ten minutes.

Frances, I think that with time in mind, I'll make sure.... I know that all members will deal with the transcribed portion of this as well, so if you'd like to begin.

**F. Birdsell:** On behalf of the Skeena Diversity Society, I would like to speak to you about the funding of community-building; leadership development; and creative, proactive and preventative approaches. We think it makes economic sense to fund these activities in a sustainable way so that real progress can be made, thereby saving the government money.

Skeena Diversity is a new society that was formed out of the CIRM process, the critical incident response model, under the B.C. ministry of multiculturalism. In 1999 the government said to communities around the province that it was not enough for governments to legislate against hate, racism and discrimination. The communities needed to come together to respond in ways that would work for them. The RCMP, Terrace city council, Terrace and District Multicultural Association, victim assistance and restorative justice — with involvement of the neighbouring native nations — are the key partners currently forming Skeena Diversity.

In the package of information that you have, there is a report that I prepared more than a year ago called the *Critical Incidents Response Model* — I would draw your attention to that — as well as the handbook that we prepared and have distributed throughout the region.

This is the second edition in that in discussions over the years, the group decided that the response mechanism of choice for how to deal with a critical incident would be that we would look to restorative justice. So we added a chapter in the back of our handbook called "Restorative Justice," and we changed the name

to *Racism Bullying Response Handbook* and included that. I'll speak to that a little bit more.

On the handout for the critical incidents response model, I would say, at the bottom of the front page, that we were not successful in receiving the Arts Now funding. It was very late in the process, and we knew that we didn't have it all together, but we did submit it. What we were able to do in that process was create a partnership with the school district with their full support.

If we had funding in place, we looked at where we would choose the schools that we would like to target the most, so we had elementary schools in a number of communities. As you're flying to your next location, look down at the distance and try to see a map where Hazelton, Kitwanga, Stewart and Terrace and the Haisla village of Kitimaat are located. Those are all within school district 82, which is our school district. It's a huge geographic area.

I would also like to draw your attention to the back page to the request for proposal, the RFP. We were not successful in that funding bid, but we were short-listed. We were the next on the list of the ones that you would give money to, but there wasn't sufficient funding. I would draw your attention to that and wish that you might remedy that.

[1055]

During a Skeena Diversity presentation to the Coast Mountains school board, one of our reps, a local elder from the Kitselas Nation, noted that discrimination happens not only because of the colour of your skin but also if you in any way look or act or speak differently.

For instance, bullying can happen because of blue hair, nose rings, a lisp, a limp. Restorative justice healing circles have been used in several schools with very positive results. When we offered to work with the schools to address these issues in innovative ways, the school board specifically asked us if we could please provide this beyond Terrace and include elementary students as well.

There are 23 schools in Coast Mountains school district 82 spread over a large geographic area, taking in a number of communities and several native nations. We were offered the opportunity to participate in the principals' meetings when the administration and the principals of those 23 schools meet to do planning. We do not have funding in place, so we are not currently able to send staff to participate on that level.

With the multicultural association being a member of AMSSA, the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of B.C., we heard about a new initiative, Safe Harbour, last spring, and we were very pleased to take part. That is the Safe Harbour — you'll notice the Safe Harbour pamphlet.

If you take a look at the list of Safe Harbour locations, I think that you'll see it was a very successful undertaking in this community in terms of the businesses, government departments and groups that have been involved. The city of Terrace has signed on, and all of their locations have sent people to be trained. The RCMP, the MP and the MLA, as well as the access centres in Terrace and in Kitimat — 36 locations in Terrace and one in Kitimat display the Safe Harbour emblem indicating their

commitment to the Safe Harbour program, working together to promote community understanding and support for cultural diversity.

Diversity training examines equitable treatment, providing a safe harbour and preparing employees. It's a two-and-a-half-hour, introductory-level workshop that has been very well received. We offer to provide in-depth diversity training workshops if the interest or the need arises, refer to our handbook and website as resources and suggest contacting restorative justice if an incident occurs or healing or resolution needs to take place. These are the solutions that the CIRM community of Terrace has developed to meet our specific needs.

We were the first community in B.C. to take Safe Harbour into the schools — to do youth ambassador diversity training. The 20 students at Caledonia Senior Secondary received points toward their portfolio for graduation and leadership development training.

Currently there are AMSSA funding proposals into Canadian Heritage and the Vancouver Foundation to expand the youth ambassador diversity training concept, and Terrace has been named as the pilot community — hopefully to begin in January 2007, but the B.C. bid process funds one-time-only projects and rarely repeats the following year.

So I have some questions for this committee. How do we access provincial funding to then take our piloted results to the next step, with follow-up support to secondary schools in Terrace and outreach to elementary schools in the neighbouring communities in school district 82? How do we compete on a provincial scale to deliver community-building and creative leadership development workshops, and how do small, financially strapped, rural and isolated communities maintain supportive solutions offered by groups like Skeena Diversity?

The B.C. government needs to be more inclusive, proactive and equitable in its funding priorities. Healthy, inclusive, safe, sustainable communities are cost-effective. We need your support to get there.

[1100]

I commend you on the CIRM process. It is underfunded, but it is an excellent approach to forging partnerships and community-building. If you would fund the B.C. ministry of multiculturalism more generously, their excellent staff would be able to work with us in the communities to deliver proactive, preventative approaches to counter hate and racism, discrimination and bullying. The competitive B.C. bid process just doesn't make sense in the realm of community-building.

Award excellence for sure. Fund those spectacularly creative ideas, but also fund the slow-moving, collaborative community leadership in a sustainable way. Invest in crime prevention through community development. Don't just start the process and leave it in suspended anticipation. Help smaller communities to respond with diversity coordinators that municipal governments are able to employ themselves in the metropolitan area. That would be equitable treatment. It makes smart economic sense in proactive crime prevention through community development leading to safer communities and schools.

As a northwestern representative for AMSSA, I would like to take a moment to address some concerns about multicultural health in rural, isolated northern communities where language and culture can pose a major barrier. It is not fair and equitable treatment if access to health care is compromised by language, race, culture, sex, age, disability, religion, orientation or appearance. The northern factor needs to be taken into account. A diversity gender lens needs to be applied, and the rather shocking statistical profile that emerges when you apply that analysis needs to be addressed.

I would draw your attention now to the Women of the North – United report that was prepared in July of this year. It provides a gender lens on northern issues. You have so many people coming to present that I asked for a separate time to speak to you about just this, and I wasn't able to. But if you look at this, we have identified quite a number of issues that other people have spoken to you about, and if you look at that with a view to the north and apply a diversity and gender lens, the issues are really important to pay attention to.

The Northern Health Authority catchment area is larger than Europe and takes in two-thirds of the geographic area of British Columbia with less than 10 percent of the population. The distance, isolation and climate aspects make for unique challenges, which we don't feel are addressed adequately when dealing with northern communities. A one-size basic formula way of dealing with B.C. cities needs to be adjusted to one of equitable treatment, with northern definition of the barriers and obstacles to full participation on par with an urban centre.

Aboriginal, multicultural, elderly and disabled women are more at risk to experience domestic violence than the general population, and for northern women the stats are twice the provincial average. A diversity gender lens needs to be applied at the collaborative, community level in northern communities. Research needs to be done in conjunction with UNBC, the Women North Network as well as Women of the North – United and the CIRM groups like Skeena Diversity as a necessary first step towards developing appropriate, inclusive and effective programming to respond to the needs of northerners.

[1105]

We need financial and program support from the provincial and federal governments as well as the health authorities to address these concerns in collaborative dialogue, research, capacity-building and leadership development. The CIRM process has been very beneficial to Terrace. We have formed wonderful partnerships. The mayor changes the designated city council representative periodically and, as a result, the majority of council has sat around the table in meetings with Skeena Diversity.

When a city councillor, the community policing constable and the coordinator of Skeena Diversity stand up together to present a Safe Harbour workshop, it gives a powerful message to the community. Now if we only had reliable funding, we'd be able to respond to the requests and the invitations that we receive.

We believe that CIRM programming should continue beyond the initial phases 1, 2 and 3 and that sustainable community building is a cost-effective approach to safer communities and safer schools. We understand the financial hardship faced by Terrace city council and school district 82 and understand that in isolated, rural communities the provincial government needs to take a stronger role in funding community building and leadership development.

Healthy, inclusive, safe, sustainable communities will actually save the government money. Invest now. We're ready and waiting.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Thank you very much, Frances, for your presentation. Certainly, as I indicated to many presenters, it's our job to be here to listen to the ideas on how we can make British Columbia a better place. I appreciate your presentation here today.

We don't have time for questions, unfortunately, but I want to thank you on behalf of not only our committee and the people of this region but our province for the work you do in trying to make it a better place.

**F. Birdsell:** Thank you very much.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Our next presentation this morning comes from Yvonne Nielson and Tona Kivi. Good morning and welcome.

**Y. Nielson:** Good morning.

This presentation is on having the B.C. government make available funding for a universal ID card for people who have a permanent disability. This information about the person's permanent disability would be put on the back of the existing BCID card, similar to the way restrictions are put on a driver's licence.

I was in a serious car crash 19 years ago, and I sustained a permanent disability. My disability is a hidden one, an acquired traumatic brain injury. I also sustained a spinal cord injury that consists of a broken lower back which is fused. I'm not a paraplegic or quadriplegic, and I'm not in a wheelchair. I have a stroke on the right side, lymphatic problems in my right leg, foot-drop tremors and a seatbelt burn.

Over the years I and thousands of other B.C. people who have a permanent disability — especially those with a hidden disability such as a brain injury, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, bipolar, autism, Tourette syndrome and other neurological impairments — run into problems because we do not have any legal ID card showing proof that we have a permanent disability.

A permanent disability is just that — permanent. Why the mention of a person's permanent disability? That ID card would help in travelling and in encounters with the police and other emergency situations. If a person can't communicate, medical reasons, post-secondary schooling, ID is proof that a person has a disability to obtain services and programs.

Since the card would be on a BCID card this information is universal and is good anywhere in B.C. and good for travelling anywhere in the world. Providing



the information would be on a volunteer basis. That is, if someone with a permanent disability does not want this information on the BCID card, they don't have to fill out that section for the card.

[1110]

You should have all the information that I've enclosed on the application process. For example, on the BCID card would be: "What is the disability? Does the person need extra leg room due to the disability? Does the person need a service animal? Does the person need an attendant? What medications does the person take? What is the person allergic to?"

Everywhere you go today ID is required. Now is the time to have these ID cards. A person with a permanent disability knows what he or she needs and is the expert.

This issue was brought up in 1989 and supported by the Terrace-Kitimat regional district. Over the years more and more support on this issue has come about: for instance, the Terrace city council, a former RCMP inspector from Terrace, the Canadian Disabled Individuals Association, the Northwest Community College, hundreds of people who have a permanent disability. Petitions were given to a few MLAs over the years. People have approached MLAs and the Premier about having a card.

The office for disability issues — that's this report here. It says this is a positive issue and should just get done. It went through the B.C. Human Rights Commission. A report called *Jumping Through Hoops* was printed. Also, this issue was brought up in the Standing Committee on Health in October of 2001 in Courtenay, B.C. No action came out of it. I have enclosed a copy of that submission.

The Premier stated in the *Terrace Standard* newspaper June 23, 2004, that it sounded like a good idea. He called the idea of an ID card reasonable if it's made available on a voluntary basis to people who want it. I have enclosed that article. I rest my case.

If the B.C. government cares about people with permanent disabilities, have the cards available now. After all, the B.C. government keeps advertising that B.C. is the best place to live. We need the card now.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Well, Yvonne, I want to thank you. I did have the honour of presenting a petition that you put forward to the previous MLA, Roger Harris. I want to thank you for your dedication and work on behalf of all of those who would like to see this happen.

I'm going to look to see if there are questions.

**B. Simpson:** Thanks, Yvonne. I did have someone in my office, and I spent a good half-hour, 40 minutes with her, having a discussion around this.

Two quick things: one, the sense of this being a way to pigeonhole or target people. I think people with disabilities have been fighting for quite some time for recognition as equal citizens and not to be labelled. So how do you overcome that, and do you see that as a problem? Two, what do you think is the cost factor to this? After all, this is the budget committee, and we're interested in cost.

**Y. Nielson:** That's why I approached you. We already have the BCID card. It's already in existence. I have no idea how much it's going to cost. All you have to do is put the information on the back of the ID card, just like the restrictions are put on a driver's licence. There would be no separate card, so there's no problem of people having the card. It's not a separate card. You would have that information on the back. Does that answer your question?

**B. Simpson:** Yeah, that's fine. What about the thought of labelling people, particularly since people with disabilities have been fighting for a long time not to be labelled?

**Y. Nielson:** It's on a voluntary basis. If a person doesn't want to have it, they don't have to put it on. But the people who need it.... I've run into problems year after year because I don't have proof. I mean, like you said, if it's going to label other people, then they don't have to.... It's on a voluntary basis. You don't have to have it if you don't want it.

**R. Hawes:** You just answered my question. I got that it was voluntary and that labelling doesn't happen, and I can understand the problems that you could have, particularly those who have hidden disabilities. I think it's pretty understandable.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Tona, do you have anything that you would like to say? I know that we talked briefly earlier.

[1115]

**T. Kivi:** Basically, what I would like to tell the committee is the difference between.... Even though Yvonne and I both have a sustained brain injury, Yvonne shows much more physical problems than I do. To me, I have a tendency to be mistaken for being on drugs, especially if I'm stopped by a policeman. Or it's: have I been drinking? I've been pulled over and made to take a breathalyser test and have pleaded with them: "I am not drunk. I don't even drink."

It's very degrading, because I can't prove the problems I have. It's so invisible. That's one of the things that I want the committee to know. People should have a right.

Even with our brain injury group we have people who don't want the stigma of having a brain injury. It's almost like we don't want people to look at us like we're stupid or like we don't have a brain or we're inept as far as our thinking.

Basically, it's not that. It's just that we're slower. Some people do feel uncomfortable with that stigma, but for me, I feel the opposite about it. It's a fact that I do travel. I do go to brain injury conventions. I still drive. I just find that for some of the problems that I have, if I go to a different town and because I'm overwhelmed with all of.... Like in Vancouver, compared to here — with the traffic, the buses, the amounts of people — I can get into a situation where I become so overwhelmed. I'm standing, just taking it all in.

**R. Hawes:** You're not alone. That happened to me too.

**T. Kivi:** Yeah, but the thing is that sometimes it'll get so bad that I'll get into a panic situation. It would be nice at that point to have, if I had to go up to somebody — say, you — and say, "Excuse me. I'm so-and-so, and I live in such-and-such. I just need help. I need someone to put me on the right bus or just to get me to a coffee shop, because I have a brain injury, and I just need someplace where I can get myself down to where I can cope and get on with what I have to do..."

That's why I'm pleading with you people to give us our ID cards.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** I note there are a couple of questions from members.

**I. Black:** I can certainly see the advantages of what you're talking about and how it would be a great benefit. Let me, in the spirit of my colleague Mr. Simpson, try to jam two questions into one.

My first question would be this. Are there other jurisdictions anywhere in North America that have done something similar to this, and could you talk about any experiences they've had?

The second is more a point of concern, because you mentioned that you drive. If you are in Toronto, for example, trying to rent a car and the car rental agency turns over your driver's licence and sees this, is there a potential that you could be discriminated against in terms of your ability to rent a car?

Those types of questions — can you talk to that a little bit?

**T. Kivi:** I wouldn't rent a car. If I was in Vancouver, I would not drive.

**I. Black:** I don't blame you for that.

**T. Kivi:** I wouldn't. When I went to G.F. Strong and was diagnosed, the doctor I saw — Dr. MacDonald — told me that I would probably be fine driving in Terrace because it's a small community and I'm very familiar with it. I would be fine in Smithers. But even though I know Prince George and have driven there before, I'm very uncomfortable about driving there, because the traffic is just.... I get too overwhelmed.

That would not be a problem. I would not rent a car, and I would not even attempt to drive in someplace like that.

**I. Black:** Sure. What about any other areas in the country, for my first question — any other areas in Canada or in the States or anywhere else in the world where they've used a similar system to what you're proposing?

**T. Kivi:** I don't really know. My car accident was five years ago, so basically, I'm fairly new. Yvonne has been more at the forefront of doing a lot of this.

**Y. Nielson:** I've been trying to get it since 1989. This has nothing to do with the drivers' licences. It's an ID card. You've got a copy of the application process. It says everything in there — what you need to know. It's multipurpose.

It has nothing to do with restrictions on a driver's licence. It's nothing to do with that. That's why it's on the BCID card. It's not a separate card; therefore, there's no stigma. Just like on drivers' licences, it says what restrictions you have.

[1120]

Actually, I have a driver's licence, but my restriction is that I need a left-foot gas pedal. Well, this has nothing to do with.... Do you understand? Like I said, if you get in trouble with the law, then you have something to go by.

**R. Lee:** It seems a very good idea. I know that you have the qualification process here. But, ultimately, do you think it should be the doctor who decides if you're qualified or not?

**Y. Nielson:** Well, you would have to go through the doctor to.... That's what I would like to see on the application for the BCID card, and then the doctor would have to fill a section out saying what the disability is. It has to be a permanent disability. Like I said, if you're permanent, you're permanent. You can't bring back my brain cells. So a doctor would have to fill a section out, and that would be brought back to the BCID card. It wouldn't be any extra. The government would just have to make the things to put the information on the back of the BCID card.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Well, Yvonne and Tona, I want to thank you for coming out today to present your idea to our committee here. As with all other presentations, I can assure you it will be given full consideration in our development of our report. So I want to thank you. Yvonne; it was nice meeting you. I had the opportunity to present that petition on your behalf.

Our next presentation this morning is from Northwest Housing Consulting. Joining us is Peggy Julseth.

Good morning, Peggy.

**P. Julseth:** Good morning. Thank you for the opportunity to come and speak to you about, I think, a very important issue to our province and especially to the northwest and Terrace. I'm a housing consultant who actually works with a lot of the non-profit housing societies, as well as private enterprise, trying to develop housing for the people of the north. Basically, I work throughout the northwest and have done so in various aspects over the last ten years through trying to provide housing directly through Health and through Terrace Anti-Poverty and other organizations.

I have served on hospital boards and the regional hospital boards. As well, at one time I was a regional district director. I do kind of understand, I guess, the realm of housing and how it connects to almost everything out there that we do. But over the last few years....

First of all, I'd like to commend the government for staying involved in the provision of housing through the province through B.C. Housing and some of your programs.

The area that I would like to mainly focus on today is seniors housing and the need for a continued program or ongoing programs to provide seniors housing to our province. As probably all of you are aware, I've just handed out a couple of stat sheets to you that we did up based on just populations, not housing. We all know that it becomes more than just housing. It enters into the health care realm and everything else.

[1125]

Over the last few years the expense of housing has certainly increased. I've just finished a couple of ILBC — Independent Living B.C. — projects in the north. I know that providing seniors housing is costing the government and the housing providers up to \$300,000 per unit. It's a large capital outlay. Plus, under the ILBC program, you're also providing ongoing supports through subsidies through Health and B.C. Housing to the northern non-profit housing societies.

When you came out with the ILBC program, you came out with two facets of it. One is that you're offering subsidies to the private sector to get involved in providing seniors housing. Through that, in the north there were absolutely zero takers. The only ILBC projects that proceeded in the north were non-profit housing societies.

There were a couple of reasons for that. It just financially was not viable for business to take up on the rent subsidies. There was no capital at all offered for a private landlord to be able to convert their building to seniors housing and then only charge an affordable rate. It just didn't look like a good business deal to private companies out there.

The government ended up with providing an allocation — I believe it was 159 units — through the Northern Health Authority and B.C. Housing in the north. Not all of those have proceeded. There are at least half a dozen different projects throughout the Northern Health Authority that have proceeded and some that have completed successfully.

As our baby-boomers kind of start taking effect into our seniors population and needing appropriate housing, the government — the provincial government, in particular, as well as municipal governments — really needs to get more involved in providing incentives for private developers as well as non-profits to produce the housing.

Now, as you're probably all aware, there's an end to the baby-boomer era. It's probably when I get there. The important thing is that when you're building housing now, you're building seniors housing so that it is flexible enough that the building can be utilized after the baby-boomers are gone for other types of housing.

In the past we haven't seen that. For example, in Terrace we have quite a number of bachelor suites that were built through the government — through B.C. Housing probably 25 years ago. They're not flexible enough that you can utilize them for other purposes other than just strictly seniors independent housing — "independent" meaning no need for assistance.

I think the province really needs to look at developing models of flexible housing — housing for seniors that they can move into when they're in their 50s or 60s and still healthy, and they can remain in that same unit throughout their life or the majority of their life.

As far as how you would fund these sorts of things — since you are a Finance Committee, I think that's a very important thing. I strongly do not believe that government can provide everything fully funded for everybody and meet everybody's needs. You do have to do a balancing act to be able to provide the services. I do think that if you do invest in your housing now, you're going to be saving dollars in health care.

[1130]

I think the ILBC program was a very small start to that. Unfortunately, that has run out, and it doesn't appear like that's going to be a new, ongoing program or a continued program. The dollars are being shifted to another area.

I think that if you look into the private sector and offer incentives such as property tax relief, possibly some grants, and look at partnering with non-profits as well as private enterprise — and even making it so that they're partners together... I think you've done a huge step on your release of the new "B.C. matters" announcement on October 3 for trying to house those who are homeless.

I was extremely pleased, reading through that announcement as well as the criteria through B.C. Housing, that there's a very conscious effort in the document to make organizations applying for that funding pull their operating dollars from other sources, such as existing services, and to pool from other ministries and other organizations in the communities and to coordinate. Instead of influxing 100 percent new dollars into the operating, you're recognizing that there are some services out there that need to be pulled in and partnered.

I think that's one thing that you can do with your seniors housing as well — and more so. Unlike in other health authorities, in the north, through the ILBC program, non-profit societies were told that to be able to qualify for the funding, they had to provide a minimum of two meals a day and a certain level of client was allowed into the building. They had to be assessed first and had to be of high enough need to get into the building.

Well, that's not really fulfilling the continuum for seniors housing and allowing that person to stay in that building. They're entering at far too acute a level going into the building. They're not remaining there — only a year or two years — and they're having to go elsewhere. I think that you could be doing more in the same building.

Terrace itself is short of seniors housing. You'll notice that in years past, a lot of our seniors and elders moved to the lower mainland and to the Okanagan for better weather and better health care services that better met their needs.

The reason I provided the stats from your government, basically, is to show you that the seniors are moving back into the north, and they're not leaving. We're seeing an influx of seniors from Vancouver and the Okanagan

areas into our area because they're selling their homes down there, and some of them can afford to live up here. But we don't have the services, and we don't have the housing to provide for them.

Instead of focusing the majority of your seniors housing or your allocations to the lower mainland where the huge population is now, I would urge you to focus a larger percentage into the northern and the smaller, rural communities or Terrace-sized communities in the north, as well as the services.

If you take construction, land value alone.... In Hazelton, for example, an ILBC project was built, and the land value was estimated at \$28,000. Where in the lower mainland, right in the centre of everything, can you get land for \$28,000? It's more cost-effective for the government to serve people if they're prepared to go into the rural and smaller communities — to serve them not only in housing but in the services that go along with them.

[1135]

I think we would find that if there is adequate seniors housing, your alternate-level-care beds, which are extremely expensive in the hospitals, would start to go down. Now, they're ending up in your alternate care-level beds because there is no room at Terrace View Lodge. There is no room at any of the other seniors housing in Terrace.

In some places, even with life-lease-type projects, there are two-year waiting lists to be able to get into it. That's somebody purchasing the unit, living in it for as long as they're able to, and then getting their money back out when they have to go elsewhere. But I don't think there's enough of that, as well, in the province.

I urge you to spend more on housing and to pool from your other resources and the other partners that are out there and to be a little bit more flexible in what you're allowing for partnerships and criteria for entering into these buildings.

I personally think that we shouldn't segregate seniors into their own little slots all the time either. If you have a mix in a building or even a mix of different needs for seniors, you have a healthier building and a happier building.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Well, Peggy, I want to thank you. Unfortunately, we have no time for questions. Again, like many others, it's our job to be here to listen to your ideas on how we can improve. I think you've done a marvellous job, and I thank you for coming today to present to us.

Just before we move on, I do want to recognize a group of students we have here who have sat through the hearings. They are from the — and don't laugh if I get this wrong; I'm going to give it my best attempt — 'Na aksa Gila Kyew Learning Centre.

How did I do?

**Some Voices:** Close.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Close, relatively? You're being polite to me. But I want to welcome you. It's nice to

have you here to sit through the hearings and see how the process works.

We have reached the end of the registered presentations. We do leave an open-mike session at the end of each of our public hearings. It is a somewhat different format. The presenters have five minutes to come and speak to the committee. There's no time for a dialogue, for questions and answers, but we do have a couple of people that have signed up that would like to present to our committee.

I'm going to call on Dawna Ottenbreit first.

Good morning.

**D. Ottenbreit:** Good morning. You'll have to excuse me. I have no written presentation because I haven't had time to prepare one.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** That is all right.

**D. Ottenbreit:** That is simply because my husband has been recently made a resident at Terrace View Lodge. It's very, very interesting — the lady talking before of the housing.

My husband has Pick's disease. It's a form of dementia, but it's a different form than Alzheimer's. He has been put into the secure care unit at that facility. The nurses, the staff up there, have a ratio, I believe, of over 25 to 3 of patients suffering from this type of dementia, where one has to be in lockup.

Unfortunately, with Pick's disease, they walk. My husband has managed to find his way out windows, and he has managed to climb over the, I would say, four-foot fence that's there to supposedly keep these people enclosed. He has been in care now a week and a half today — since he was put into Terrace View. He escaped the second day. He has escaped every day. This is my time of respite.

Pick's disease is a disease where they're very onto the caregiver. I have been the caregiver for over ten years, and I so appreciate how wonderful Northern Health has been, everyone has been, in placing this gentleman. Now we have him up in an acute care bed because we cannot contain him, so he is costing us and the health community megadollars. It's my understanding that there was a plan in the works to add 44 beds to Terrace View, I believe it was. It's also my understanding that this has been scrapped.

[1140]

I think this is something that the committee really needs to look into, because we have people out in the community, not just my husband, that are afflicted with different forms of dementia, that wander. But we're going to a position where we're going to have all these people wandering because we can't keep them properly contained. Someone is going to get killed or hurt, and it's at no fault of any staff. It's the fault of the facility that probably needs and deserves upgrading.

It's just such a difficult thing to be a caregiver of a person of this nature of aphasia, because they won't leave you alone. They have to be with you. You cannot have somebody come into the house and help care for

them. They will leave. If you go somewhere, they will follow. They never forget their way home, but you have absolutely no space. It's the only way I can describe it.

The staff of Northern Health were trying to give me a two-week respite. I have had nothing, simply because the facility cannot contain this gentleman. There are so many we have out there on the waiting list, and there are so many caregivers such as I. That's all we are: just ordinary people trying to look after our loved ones, and we are burning out. The next thing you're going to find.... It's like me. I go on a basis up to mental health, just to talk, just to ensure that I can keep my sanity.

I would like to thank you very, very much for allowing me to speak, and I do hope that you will look into this expansion at Terrace View and an upgrade of the facilities.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Dawna, thank you for coming out to present to us.

For our next presentation, I will call on Myrna Stevens.

Just possibly, prior to listening to Myrna, we will request from the Northern Health Authority an update on the bed allocation to see where we're at from that and get the information back to the committee.

**J. Horgan:** Particularly at Terrace View.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** At Terrace View, yes.

**M. Stevens:** Good morning.

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Good morning. How are you, Myrna?

**M. Stevens:** I'm not too bad.

I've come here today just to observe. I caught the bit on the news about the open house, so I decided to come and check it out. I've been listening, and many of the stories and presentations that I've heard applied to me.

I sit here today, and you see the end result of a person who has slipped through the cracks, through school. I am uneducated. I am a single parent of two. Both children have been mentioned — their situations. My youngest has severe ADHD, and I was very impressed and very happy that the doctor was here speaking to you, because he was the one that I turned to.

My oldest daughter is ten, and she is currently sitting on a wait-list at school for an IEP. As to what that means, I cannot tell you. I just know that it's called an IEP. We are waiting for a psychoeducational assessment to be done for her.

It's my understanding, from the principal at my child's school, that there are 99 identified children.... They're only identified; they haven't been dealt with. That brought me to go to the principal and ask her straight out: "Well, if there are 99 identified students within this school, why is the school not rushing it? Why are they not doing something about it?" The answer that I got was that the time and money, pretty much, are what is delaying this process.

I just happen to be a very pushy parent, and I pointed out to this principal that I have severe trust issues with educators and whomever. I've gone through some very unfortunate situations throughout my entire life.

I am only 28 years old and a single parent. It's my job as a parent to ensure the safety and the well-being of my children and other children. So I have gone out and have tried to find places to find help.

[1145]

I moved from Prince George last year in hopes that Terrace would be able to provide me with assistance with my child, who is severely ADHD. Having a child like that is.... It's no picnic. It's always a constant learning thing. You learn something new from that child. They're teaching us the things that we need to touch on.

My child. He would have you wrapped right around his finger right now, if he was here. Everywhere I've gone — it doesn't matter — he is just full of energy. They're constantly going. It's never-ending. Some days begin at 4:30 in the morning and don't end until about 1:00.

I've been wanting to see some development for children that have ADHD — specifically for ADHD and the various versions of ADHD, like ODD and what have you. Because I am poor, I live on welfare, and I don't have a lot of money. I am uneducated, so I can't get myself a good job — right?

I would like to see more help for parents and grandparents in my situation. You've heard them say that a lot of these children do end up in foster care.

I am talking straight from experience, from what has happened to me alone. I end up having to advocate for people in my situation, to get them help, because it's just too tough.

I hear this lady speaking about respite care. That is desperately needed. I need respite care. I had it, and then it was pulled from me because.... Well, that is just totally different. But it is desperately needed. I think that it can be done.

I would really love to see some development happen for a centre for children who live with ADHD. Not just for the children, but for their families as well, because it affects them. I have gone five years, endlessly, without a break — up until right now, because my child is in kindergarten. And it is a very intense time when you're leaving your child, because you never know what they're going to do. You never know.

The only solution that I have gotten so far from the Ministry of Children and Families was to possibly look into putting my child into foster care in another town or finding somebody who could provide day care for me. But day cares won't accept my child unless he has his own supported child care worker.

I've had four trained ECEs throw their arms up at me and tell me that they can't handle my child. There are four of them. Three of them could mind the rest of the children in that day care, and one of them could devote their time to my son. But because they're not trained, they don't have the skills to work with my child.

It's very hard, from my point. I have had family members, friends — you name it — lock their doors on

me, not answer their phone. It's very hard for one person to try to take care of a child like this.

It's not something that I did. It's something that they're born with. He can't help the fact that he's just constantly going. It's an endless battle with his own body.

I see a lot of it in Terrace. I see it everywhere I go, and the only option that I have to offer other parents in my situation is: get them assessed. Then, hopefully, somewhere along the line we can get some kind of funding.

I've been wanting to develop a program for children that live with ADHD. As yet, I have not been able to do that because it's an ongoing situation. As soon as your eyes are open in the morning, it's endless.

Going back to the IEPs and whatnot, I would like to see more development and more moneys going towards helping the children, because they desperately need it. They desperately do. As a person who has gone through the system and not gotten any help — I was passed on from grade to grade — I urge whoever has got the

money — and you've got it, or you know what's going to be done with it — to try and push it towards where it's desperately needed: the children. Because they really do.

[1150]

**B. Lekstrom (Chair):** Myrna, thank you for coming forward, first of all, and offering your personal views and ideas on how it can be made better. It's not always easy. The commitment you have to your children is very clear. Your message has been heard by our committee.

It is now just after 11:50, and we have no further registered presenters to the committee today. I do want to take this opportunity to thank the people of Terrace and surrounding area for coming out and giving us their views on how we can improve and make British Columbia an even better place. Again, thank you for the hospitality that we've been shown as a committee.

With that, we will stand adjourned.

The committee adjourned at 11:51 a.m.

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