



Second Session, 39th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF
**DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**
(HANSARD)

Thursday, February 11, 2010
Afternoon Sitting
Volume 10, Number 4

THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

ISSN 0709-1281

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
His Honour the Honourable Steven L. Point, OBC

SECOND SESSION, 39TH PARLIAMENT

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
Honourable Bill Barisoff

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Premier and President of the Executive Council	Hon. Gordon Campbell
Minister of State for Intergovernmental Relations.....	Hon. Naomi Yamamoto
Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance.....	Hon. Colin Hansen
Minister of State for the Olympics and ActNow B.C.....	Hon. Mary McNeil
Minister of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation	Hon. George Abbott
Minister of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development	Hon. Moira Stilwell
Minister of Agriculture and Lands.....	Hon. Steve Thomson
Attorney General	Hon. Michael de Jong, QC
Minister of Children and Family Development and Minister Responsible for Child Care	Hon. Mary Polak
Minister of Citizens' Services and Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism and the Public Affairs Bureau	Hon. Ben Stewart
Minister of Community and Rural Development.....	Hon. Bill Bennett
Minister of Education and Minister Responsible for Early Learning and Literacy.....	Hon. Margaret MacDiarmid
Minister of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources.....	Hon. Blair Lekstrom
Minister of State for Mining	Hon. Randy Hawes
Minister of Environment.....	Hon. Barry Penner
Minister of State for Climate Action.....	Hon. John Yap
Minister of Forests and Range and Minister Responsible for the Integrated Land Management Bureau.....	Hon. Pat Bell
Minister of Health Services.....	Hon. Kevin Falcon
Minister of Healthy Living and Sport	Hon. Ida Chong
Minister of Housing and Social Development	Hon. Rich Coleman
Minister of Labour	Hon. Murray Coell
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General	Hon. Kash Heed
Minister of Small Business, Technology and Economic Development.....	Hon. Iain Black
Minister of Tourism, Culture and the Arts	Hon. Kevin Krueger
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.....	Hon. Shirley Bond

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Leader of the Official Opposition.....	Carole James
Deputy Speaker.....	Linda Reid
Assistant Deputy Speaker	Claire Trevena
Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole	Harry Bloy
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly.....	E. George MacMinn, OBC, QC
Clerk Assistant	Robert Vaive
Clerk Assistant and Law Clerk.....	Ian D. Izard, QC
Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees.....	Craig H. James
Clerk Assistant and Committee Clerk.....	Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Sergeant-at-Arms	Gary Lenz
Director, Hansard Services.....	Jo-Anne Kern
Acting Legislative Librarian	Peter Gourlay
Legislative Comptroller	Dan Arbic

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS

Abbott, Hon. George (L)..... Shuswap
Austin, Robin (NDP)..... Skeena
Bains, Harry (NDP)..... Surrey-Newton
Barisoff, Hon. Bill (L)..... Penticton
Barnett, Donna (L)..... Cariboo-Chilcotin
Bell, Hon. Pat (L)..... Prince George-Mackenzie
Bennett, Hon. Bill (L)..... Kootenay East
Black, Dawn (NDP)..... New Westminster
Black, Hon. Iain (L)..... Port Moody-Coquitlam
Bloy, Harry (L)..... Burnaby-Lougheed
Bond, Hon. Shirley (L)..... Prince George-Valemount
Brar, Jagrup (NDP)..... Surrey-Fleetwood
Cadieux, Stephanie (L)..... Surrey-Panorama
Campbell, Hon. Gordon (L)..... Vancouver-Point Grey
Cantelon, Ron (L)..... Parksville-Qualicum
Chong, Hon. Ida (L)..... Oak Bay-Gordon Head
Chouhan, Raj (NDP)..... Burnaby-Edmonds
Coell, Hon. Murray (L)..... Saanich North and the Islands
Coleman, Hon. Rich (L)..... Fort Langley-Aldergrove
Conroy, Katrine (NDP)..... Kootenay West
Coons, Gary (NDP)..... North Coast
Corrigan, Kathy (NDP)..... Burnaby-Deer Lake
Dalton, Marc (L)..... Maple Ridge-Mission
de Jong, Hon. Michael, QC (L)..... Abbotsford West
Dix, Adrian (NDP)..... Vancouver-Kingsway
Donaldson, Doug (NDP)..... Stikine
Elmore, Mable (NDP)..... Vancouver-Kensington
Falcon, Hon. Kevin (L)..... Surrey-Cloverdale
Farnworth, Mike (NDP)..... Port Coquitlam
Fleming, Rob (NDP)..... Victoria-Swan Lake
Foster, Eric (L)..... Vernon-Monashee
Fraser, Scott (NDP)..... Alberni-Pacific Rim
Gentner, Guy (NDP)..... Delta North
Hammell, Sue (NDP)..... Surrey-Green Timbers
Hansen, Hon. Colin (L)..... Vancouver-Quilchena
Hawes, Hon. Randy (L)..... Abbotsford-Mission
Hayer, Dave S. (L)..... Surrey-Tynehead
Heed, Hon. Kash (L)..... Vancouver-Fraserview
Herbert, Spencer (NDP)..... Vancouver-West End
Hogg, Gordon (L)..... Surrey-White Rock
Horgan, John (NDP)..... Juan de Fuca
Horne, Douglas (L)..... Coquitlam-Burke Mountain
Howard, Rob (L)..... Richmond Centre
Huntington, Vicki (Ind.)..... Delta South
James, Carole (NDP)..... Victoria-Beacon Hill
Karagianis, Maurine (NDP)..... Esquimalt-Royal Roads
Krog, Leonard (NDP)..... Nanaimo
Krueger, Hon. Kevin (L)..... Kamloops-South Thompson
Kwan, Jenny Wai Ching (NDP)..... Vancouver-Mount Pleasant
Lake, Terry (L)..... Kamloops-North Thompson
Lali, Harry (NDP)..... Fraser-Nicola
Lee, Richard T. (L)..... Burnaby North
Lekstrom, Hon. Blair (L)..... Peace River South
Les, John (L)..... Chilliwack
Letnick, Norm (L)..... Kelowna-Lake Country
MacDiarmid, Hon. Margaret (L)..... Vancouver-Fairview
Macdonald, Norm (NDP)..... Columbia River-Revelstoke
McIntyre, Joan (L)..... West Vancouver-Sea to Sky
McNeil, Hon. Mary (L)..... Vancouver-False Creek
McRae, Don (L)..... Comox Valley
Mungall, Michelle (NDP)..... Nelson-Creston
Penner, Hon. Barry (L)..... Chilliwack-Hope
Pimm, Pat (L)..... Peace River North
Polak, Hon. Mary (L)..... Langley
Popham, Lana (NDP)..... Saanich South
Ralston, Bruce (NDP)..... Surrey-Whalley
Reid, Linda (L)..... Richmond East
Routley, Bill (NDP)..... Cowichan Valley
Routley, Doug (NDP)..... Nanaimo-North Cowichan
Rustad, John (L)..... Nechako Lakes
Sather, Michael (NDP)..... Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows
Simons, Nicholas (NDP)..... Powell River-Sunshine Coast
Simpson, Bob (NDP)..... Cariboo North
Simpson, Shane (NDP)..... Vancouver-Hastings
Slater, John (L)..... Boundary-Similkameen
Stewart, Hon. Ben (L)..... Westside-Kelowna
Stilwell, Hon. Moira (L)..... Vancouver-Langara
Sultan, Ralph (L)..... West Vancouver-Capilano
Thomson, Hon. Steve (L)..... Kelowna-Mission
Thorne, Diane (NDP)..... Coquitlam-Maillardville
Thorntwaite, Jane (L)..... North Vancouver-Seymour
Trevena, Claire (NDP)..... North Island
van Dongen, John (L)..... Abbotsford South
Yamamoto, Hon. Naomi (L)..... North Vancouver-Lonsdale
Yap, Hon. John (L)..... Richmond-Steveston

LIST OF MEMBERS BY RIDING

Abbotsford-Mission Hon. Randy Hawes
Abbotsford South..... John van Dongen
Abbotsford West Hon. Michael de Jong, QC
Alberni-Pacific Rim..... Scott Fraser
Boundary-Similkameen..... John Slater
Burnaby-Deer Lake..... Kathy Corrigan
Burnaby-Edmonds..... Raj Chouhan
Burnaby-Lougheed..... Harry Bloy
Burnaby North..... Richard T. Lee
Cariboo-Chilcotin..... Donna Barnett
Cariboo North..... Bob Simpson
Chilliwack..... John Les
Chilliwack-Hope..... Hon. Barry Penner
Columbia River-Revelstoke..... Norm Macdonald
Comox Valley..... Don McRae
Coquitlam-Burke Mountain..... Douglas Horne
Coquitlam-Maillardville..... Diane Thorne
Cowichan Valley..... Bill Routley
Delta North..... Guy Gentner
Delta South..... Vicki Huntington
Esquimalt-Royal Roads..... Maurine Karagianis
Fort Langley-Aldergrove..... Hon. Rich Coleman
Fraser-Nicola..... Harry Lali
Juan de Fuca..... John Horgan
Kamloops-North Thompson..... Terry Lake
Kamloops-South Thompson..... Hon. Kevin Krueger
Kelowna-Lake Country..... Norm Letnick
Kelowna-Mission..... Hon. Steve Thomson
Kootenay East..... Hon. Bill Bennett
Kootenay West..... Katrine Conroy
Langley..... Hon. Mary Polak
Maple Ridge-Mission..... Marc Dalton
Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows..... Michael Sather
Nanaimo..... Leonard Krog
Nanaimo-North Cowichan..... Doug Routley
Nechako Lakes..... John Rustad
Nelson-Creston..... Michelle Mungall
New Westminster..... Dawn Black
North Coast..... Gary Coons
North Island..... Claire Trevena
North Vancouver-Lonsdale..... Hon. Naomi Yamamoto
North Vancouver-Seymour..... Jane Thorntwaite
Oak Bay-Gordon Head..... Hon. Ida Chong
Parksville-Qualicum..... Ron Cantelon
Peace River North..... Pat Pimm
Peace River South..... Hon. Blair Lekstrom
Penticton..... Hon. Bill Barisoff
Port Coquitlam..... Mike Farnworth
Port Moody-Coquitlam..... Hon. Iain Black
Powell River-Sunshine Coast..... Nicholas Simons
Prince George-Mackenzie..... Hon. Pat Bell
Prince George-Valemount..... Hon. Shirley Bond
Richmond Centre..... Rob Howard
Richmond East..... Linda Reid
Richmond-Steveston..... Hon. John Yap
Saanich North and the Islands..... Hon. Murray Coell
Saanich South..... Lana Popham
Shuswap..... Hon. George Abbott
Skeena..... Robin Austin
Stikine..... Doug Donaldson
Surrey-Cloverdale..... Hon. Kevin Fleming
Surrey-Fleetwood..... Jagrup Brar
Surrey-Green Timbers..... Sue Hammell
Surrey-Newton..... Harry Bains
Surrey-Panorama..... Stephanie Cadieux
Surrey-Tynehead..... Dave S. Hayer
Surrey-Whalley..... Bruce Ralston
Surrey-White Rock..... Gordon Hogg
Vancouver-Fairview..... Hon. Margaret MacDiarmid
Vancouver-False Creek..... Hon. Mary McNeil
Vancouver-Fraserview..... Hon. Kash Heed
Vancouver-Hastings..... Shane Simpson
Vancouver-Kensington..... Mable Elmore
Vancouver-Kingsway..... Adrian Dix
Vancouver-Langara..... Hon. Moira Stilwell
Vancouver-Mount Pleasant..... Jenny Wai Ching Kwan
Vancouver-Point Grey..... Hon. Gordon Campbell
Vancouver-Quilchena..... Hon. Colin Hansen
Vancouver-West End..... Spencer Herbert
Vernon-Monashee..... Eric Foster
Victoria-Beacon Hill..... Carole James
Victoria-Swan Lake..... Rob Fleming
West Vancouver-Capilano..... Ralph Sultan
West Vancouver-Sea to Sky..... Joan McIntyre
Westside-Kelowna..... Hon. Ben Stewart

CONTENTS

Thursday, February 11, 2010
Afternoon Sitting

	Page
Address by the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada.....	2971
Rt. Hon. S. Harper	
Hon. G. Campbell	
C. James	

Routine Business

Statements (Standing Order 25B)	2975
Kersley Musical Theatre production of <i>Li'l Abner</i>	
B. Simpson	
Olympic Torch Relay in West Vancouver–Sea to Sky area	
J. McIntyre	
Aboriginal education program in Sooke school district	
J. Horgan	
Olympic Torch Relay in Cariboo-Chilcotin area	
D. Barnett	
Greater Victoria Citizens Counselling Centre	
R. Fleming	
Olympic training in Comox Valley and support for Ghanaian athlete	
D. McRae	
Oral Questions.....	2977
Oversight of oil and gas industry	
J. Horgan	
Hon. B. Lekstrom	
R. Fleming	
B. Ralston	
Call for inquiry re missing and murdered aboriginal women	
D. Routley	
Hon. M. de Jong	
M. Mungall	
B. Simpson	
Hon. G. Abbott	
Services for children and families	
M. Karagianis	
Hon. M. Polak	
Buy B.C. program	
L. Popham	
Hon. S. Thomson	

Petitions	2982
G. Coons	
Hon. J. Yap	
K. Conroy	
D. McRae	
D. Donaldson	

Orders of the Day

Throne Speech Debate (<i>continued</i>)	2982
J. Slater	
G. Gentner	
Hon. B. Stewart	
D. Routley	
Hon. I. Chong	
G. Coons	
Hon. M. Polak	

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2010

The House met at 1:32 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, is in the precinct. If you will remain in your seats.

[1335]

Hon. Members, this is truly a historic day in the province of British Columbia. At this time I'd like to ask the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, to address the British Columbia Legislative Assembly. [Applause.]

**Address by the
Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper,
Prime Minister of Canada**

Rt. Hon. S. Harper (Prime Minister): Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, the Hon. Bill Barisoff; Premier of the province of British Columbia, the Hon. Gordon Campbell; the Leader of the Opposition, the hon. Carole James; distinguished Members of the Legislative Assembly; ladies and gentlemen.

Mesdames et Messieurs, c'est un immense plaisir d'être ici avec vous aujourd'hui dans le cadre de cette célébration de votre province et de notre pays.

It is an enormous pleasure for me to be here today for this momentous and great celebration of your province and of our country.

I've often said that the best thing about being Prime Minister is the unparalleled opportunity I have to travel the length and breadth of this vast country and to meet the wonderful people who call it home.

Today in these travels, as the Speaker mentioned, we are undertaking a first. In all the years since 1871, when British Columbia made that momentous decision to join the new Dominion and to truly make it a country from sea to sea, no Prime Minister has ever formally addressed this great assembly, and I want to thank the Speaker of the House for providing me with this opportunity.

Sir, you do me — and, in fact, all of you do me — a very great honour, and I appreciate it.

So here we are in the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. British Columbia — Canadians from coast to coast to coast have known you for decades by the slogan on your licence plates: "Beautiful British Columbia." It is no exaggeration. The natural beauty is almost always the first thing people notice about British Columbia when they arrive.

The famous Canadian historian and essayist Stephen Leacock put it rather well a very long time ago. Describing his maiden trip to B.C. in his book entitled *My Discovery*

of the West, he recalled a question that had been posed to him at a Canadian Club function in Vancouver. He said: "I was asked why I had never visited the province before. I said that like so many other people, I had never come to it, because I didn't realize how wonderful it was. If I had known what it was like, I wouldn't have been content with a mere visit. I would have been born here."

B.C.'s unmatched beauty — and its promise of a better life — has never lost its power to enchant and to enthrall and to draw ever more newcomers to its sparkling shores. It began with the myriad nations of our first peoples, whose spirit has animated this land for thousands of years.

[1340]

It continued with the great explorers John Finlay, Simon Fraser, Alexander Mackenzie, David Thompson — those who sought to connect it to the wider economic forces of the continent. It captured the imagination of a generation of adventurers who travelled enormous distances when gold was discovered on the Fraser River, and it was at Craigellachie where the Last Spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway — the single most important nation-building project in the history of our country — was driven.

Ladies and gentlemen, British Columbia is still calling out now to all of the peoples of the world. From a sparsely populated outpost of our country, B.C. has become the third-largest province, boasting one of the most cosmopolitan and livable cities in the world, still growing fast, and leading Canada's way into a new century, a century that will be defined by the opportunities of the Asia-Pacific region for which British Columbia is Canada's gateway.

How the generation of 1871 — John Foster McCreight, Amor De Cosmos and all the rest — must marvel at the British Columbia of 2010, the British Columbia with the talent, with the energy, with the capability to host huge world-class events like the Olympic Games that will be opened tomorrow.

You know, events like these have a significance beyond themselves. They serve as historic markers of where a community is going and how its people see themselves. For instance, to visit British Columbia and Vancouver even now is to be reminded of Expo 86. Most of you will recall that world's fair and what it meant. At a time when Asia was beginning to demonstrate its capacity to become a future economic powerhouse, that event put your province and our country on the map of the Pacific.

That world's fair showcased this part of our country, and we all remember the surge in investment and population that followed. But it also changed British Columbia. British Columbia became bolder, stronger, possessed of the shining confidence that is a consequence of success and so necessary to scale even greater heights.

Now you are calling the world back once again in even more spectacular fashion. During the Olympic and

Paralympic Games 6,800 athletes and team officials, 10,000 reporters and a quarter-million spectators will gather in Vancouver and Whistler. By any measure, these are remarkable gatherings, yet a mere recitation of the numbers hardly does them justice.

The 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games has been an unparalleled organizational and logistical undertaking. They will be simply the most ambitious sporting event ever undertaken in this country. The work of the Vancouver Olympics organizing committee, in conjunction with its partners at all levels of government — federal, provincial, municipal, our Four Host First Nations — is itself a feat worthy of the ancient Olympiads that these games honour.

Like the earlier Expo, this is a tremendous accomplishment, and also like it, we cannot yet know how these games will change us or what their legacy will be. But we do know this, ladies and gentlemen: that British Columbia has made enormous strides in the early years of the 21st century. It has grown exponentially, gathered economic strength and become more important in Confederation than at any time in the history of this country.

It is not hard to predict that in some distant year when British Columbians reflect upon these games, you will see them as an affirmation of what you have achieved and as your point of departure into a new and exciting era.

On behalf of the government of Canada and indeed all Canadians, I'd like to thank everyone involved in the organization of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games and those who have supported them, including those of you right here in this chamber, for a job well done, a job very well done. [Applause.]

[1345]

Je veux aussi vous dire que tous les Canadiens et toutes les Canadiennes sont fiers d'être partenaires de ces Jeux. Que ce soit sous la forme de l'infrastructure des lieux, de fonds patrimoniaux, d'événements culturels, ou d'ententes de sécurité essentielle, tous les Canadiens, par l'intermédiaire du gouvernement du Canada, ont fait des investissements requis pour assurer que l'événement soit de classe mondiale, car ces Jeux sont les Jeux du Canada.

I also want to tell you that all Canadians are proud to be partners in these games. Be it in the form of venue infrastructure, legacy funds, cultural events or the essential security arrangements, all Canadians, through the government of Canada, have made the investments needed to ensure a world-class event because, while Vancouver and Whistler may be the staging grounds of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, let there be no doubt, as Premier Campbell said himself in December when we welcomed the Olympic flame to Parliament Hill: "These games are Canada's games."

While British Columbia will have on display during these games everything of which you are so proud, the

thing that will be the most visible, once our national teams and athletes appear on the stage, will be B.C.'s greatest attribute and its greatest asset, and that is that British Columbia is part of Canada.

It is all of Canada that will be cheering our athletes on. It is all Canadians, from Cape Race to Nootka Sound to the men and women standing on guard at Alert in Nunavut, who will be glued to their television sets not just cheering for our athletes but feeling with them every step of the way.

In this great striving among the nations, which is no less serious or less determined for being undertaken in the spirit of goodwill, Canadian athletes will create now the yesterdays that we shall all savour in our tomorrows, the stories of which we shall remind each other — the feats of courage, commitment and fair play that we shall offer to our children and our children's children as examples when they ask: "What does it mean to be Canadian?"

When we answer, we shall feel that warm glow of pride, as we should as Canadians. Patriotism, ladies and gentlemen, patriotism as Canadians should not make us feel the least bit shy or embarrassed. I know that thoughts of grandeur or boisterous displays of nationalism we tend to associate with others. I also admit that over the centuries things have been done around the world in the name of national pride or love of country that would have been better left undone. Yet we should never cast aside our pride in a country so incredible, in a land that we are so fortunate to call home, merely because the notion has sometimes been abused.

There is nothing wrong and there is much that is right in celebrating together when our fellow citizens, in this case our athletes, perceiving some splendid star high above us, willingly pay the cost and take the chance to stretch forth their hands and try to touch it for that one shining moment. For no good thing is without risk, and no ideal can be reached without sacrifice. Ask any Olympian who wears the maple leaf.

That maple leaf, we realize, symbolizes more than just the athletes who wear it. It symbolizes the country we love. It symbolizes the Canada, our Canada, that has shown even during this global recession and will show during these games that it can compete and can win against the very best in the world.

[1350]

It is the Canada, our Canada, whose other citizens who wear the maple leaf, our Armed Forces, serve and have served the world over, never for conquest or advantage but simply to spread our gifts of freedom, democracy and justice, to make the world a little safer, a little better, as they are doing in Afghanistan today, or to give some hope to others and to rescue our fellow citizens, as they have done so spectacularly in Haiti.

That Canada, our Canada, and so many of our citizens have given so willingly to Haiti not because we think we

will gain some power or some return, but because at its heart our country is compassionate and generous not only with our fellow citizens but with our fellow human beings as well.

You know, in recognizing all of these things about our country, we don't make the claim that it is perfect. But when we have done wrong, as we truly have on occasion — the Indian residential schools, the Chinese head tax — we have tried to learn from those mistakes and to make amends. And that, my fellow Canadians — learning from our history — we have discovered is the better way to build our future. I believe it is a real strength of this country. It has made us history's benefactors instead of its prisoners.

Le Canada, notre magnifique pays, où nous accueillons le monde non seulement pour les Jeux olympiques mais dans le cadre de notre identité propre. Car tous les pays, quand ils viendront, retrouveront leurs frères et soeurs parmi nous, des Canadiens et des Canadiennes qui sont venus de tous les coins de la planète et qui continuent à venir, mettant de côté de vieilles querelles et embrassant un avenir commun ensemble.

Canada, our magnificent land, to which we are welcoming the world not just for the Olympic and Paralympic Games but as a part of our very identity. All nations when they come here will already find their brothers and sisters among us, Canadians who have arrived from every corner of the planet and continue to come to put aside old quarrels and to embrace a common future together.

So when we in our national anthem ask God to keep our land glorious and free, we mean all of us who choose to be Canadians of equal worth not just in His eyes but in each other's.

Canada, our Canada, is truly worthy of our pride and our patriotism. Let us hold our flag high at our embassies and our aid bases, our outposts and our vessels, our stadiums and our venues, our businesses and our homes during these Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Games — but not just for these games, also for the G8, the G-20, the North American Leaders Summit, the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and any other great occasion — not only as a symbol of how much we appreciate all that we have but also as a sign of welcome to the world.

Let it be a cheerful red and white reminder of a quiet and humble patriotism that, while making no claims on its neighbours, is ready to stand on guard for itself.

We will ask the world to forgive us this time this uncharacteristic outburst of patriotism and pride — our pride of being part of a country that is strong, confident and stands tall among the nations. We will let our flag wave here in British Columbia, beautiful British Columbia, over the podium of the 2010 Winter Games. This is truly British Columbia's golden moment, and it is also Canada's time to shine.

I thank you so much for letting me come here to be a part of it. *Merci beaucoup*. God bless Canada. [Applause.]

[1355]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Prime Minister.

At this time I'd like to call on the Premier of British Columbia to make a few remarks.

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you very much, Prime Minister, for coming and joining us today at this historic time in the province of British Columbia. The first time in 139 years that a Prime Minister has come and spoken directly with the Legislature of British Columbia is truly historic, and it happens on a truly historic day. Tomorrow we will welcome the world to the 21st Winter Olympic Games, and we are preparing to welcome the world to the Paralympic Games, as well, in March.

It was over ten years ago that a few British Columbians decided: why not? Why not try to host the Olympic Games in Vancouver? Since that time, hon. Speaker and Mr. Prime Minister, we've had three Prime Ministers, we've had four Premiers, we've had four mayors of Vancouver, and we've had two mayors of Whistler. Yet we have come together as seldom before to bring together the voices and the talents of Canadians to prepare for the 21st Winter Olympiad.

From the time that Beijing was awarded the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, British Columbia and the organizing committee for Vancouver were determined to make these games in 2010 Canada's games. Every Premier from every province supported us. Every Premier from every territory supported us in this great endeavour. But we have had no stronger partner — no one who has been more committed to assuring that, as we introduced the world to Canada in the 21st century, we did it to show the talents of all Canadians — than the Prime Minister. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for that. [Applause.]

It was the inspiration of the Olympic Games that has fired our youth across this country. Again, we should recognize the great partners we have had in the government of Canada as we've pursued this goal and this dream which was first imagined by a few Canadians.

In fact, Prime Minister, since the torch touched down here 105 days ago in Victoria when you welcomed it to Canada from Greece, that flame has gone from Victoria to over a thousand communities. Every community that flame has gone to has come together as never before. They've come together with a sense of aspiration and hope for what they can accomplish. More importantly, that torch has touched the lives of individual Canadians in ways that we can never expect or never anticipate.

In the small town of Truro, Nova Scotia — 15,000 people — 7,000 people arrived to welcome the torch, to wave the flag and say: "Go, Canada, go!" Across the country it went to the farthest western point in Canada, Old Crow in Yukon. It went to the farthest northern point in Alert, 800 kilometres south of the North Pole. It's travelled to the farthest eastern point of our country, Cape St. Francis in Newfoundland.

Then, Mr. Prime Minister and hon. Speaker, it turned the corner. It came back through thousands of miles of forests, a thousand miles of prairie, a thousand miles of mountains. It's back here in British Columbia, and we are ready tomorrow to welcome the world and light that flame.

You can't anticipate the way the torch will touch the lives of people. I was in Golden, a town of 4,200 people, Mr. Prime Minister, and 4,000 people were there for the torch. The last torchbearer that lit the community cauldron was 93 years old, and he was asked at the time: "What's the secret to be living for 93 years?" He gave the only answer he could give, hon. Speaker: "I live in Golden, British Columbia."

It goes to Osoyoos, and there a Special Olympics athlete raises the spirit not just of the community but of the entire province with his enthusiasm, his commitment and his belief in himself and his country.

[1400]

Or it goes to Langley, where a terminally ill patient who has a few weeks, maybe months left to live wants to go and see the torch. Her nurses say: "I will get you to that torch. I'll give you my time." Her doctors say, "We can get you there," but there's no transportation, so the fire department says: "We'll take you." That woman got to see that torch as one of the last things you could do, which was lighting up her heart and reminding her of how lucky she was to live in a country like Canada at a time like this.

That torch has inspired people across this country. Millions of Canadians — 15 million Canadians — have had the opportunity to see that torch.

Prime Minister, that in no small way was the result of your vision that said: how can we use this Olympic relay to unite Canada? To create a golden thread that went from Victoria all across our country through small villages, large towns to First Nations reserves so Canadians could feel that this was their Olympics....

So Mr. Prime Minister, I am very, very pleased to have you here today, and I want to say, on behalf of all British Columbians: "Thank you for your leadership and your vision." This entire event will show the power of sport to unite us as one country, a country that has dreams and that, when we work together, can reach those dreams.

Today there are 206 athletes who have arrived in Vancouver and Whistler. They carry the hopes and the dreams and the aspirations of Canadians from coast to coast to coast, from the Atlantic to the Arctic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. We all know them. We all have our favourites, but we know this: this time Canadian athletes and Canadian teams are going to win gold medals at the Olympic Games when we host them in Canada.

In the words of the thousands and thousands of people who have come to the Olympic events, I want our voices to be raised with all Canadians as we join in helping our team reach its full potential with those three words that will unite the country, that will drive

us forward to success, that will ensure that we get gold medals: go, Canada, go!

Some Hon. Members: Go, Canada, go! Go, Canada, go! Go, Canada, go!

Hon. G. Campbell: Thank you, Prime Minister. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker: At this time I'd like to call on the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition to say a few remarks.

C. James: On behalf of the official opposition, I'd like to also welcome the hon. Prime Minister to British Columbia and to thank the Prime Minister for acknowledging the contributions that British Columbians have made in our history but also the incredible contribution that the people of British Columbia have made when it comes to the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

As I've said before, this really is a historic event in the history of our province and our country. For years we've been building to this moment. It's been a long journey, and the time has come. Tomorrow the Olympic torch will enter B.C. Place and will light the Olympic cauldron. Every British Columbian and every Canadian that has carried that torch on its route to Vancouver symbolizes the potential that we all carry, the opportunity that each of us has to lead, to guide us to a better British Columbia and a better Canada.

I also want to take this moment to acknowledge the tremendous work and dedication that our athletes have done to reach this point. When we think of the hours of training, the incredible time and energy and sacrifice that they have made, I think it's important on all our behalf to express our appreciation to those athletes for their dedication. [Applause.]

[1405]

I also want to make sure that I offer our support to the families who supported those athletes to get here. Anyone who's had a child involved in sports, who's been at the arena at 4 a.m., who knows the late-night practices, who's taken home that gear back and forth and back and forth, knows that incredible time and energy that those families have put in. So on all our behalf, a huge thank-you to the families of the athletes who will be competing as well.

Now, I'm sure the Prime Minister looks back fondly on the last time that Canada hosted the Winter Games, and I noticed the Prime Minister mentioned that patriotism is sometimes uncharacteristic for Canadians. Well, sometimes also, Prime Minister, we see competition as uncharacteristic for Canadians. While I hesitate to fuel the friendly competition that exists between the Prime Minister's home province and our province, I do want the Prime Minister to know that I think British Columbia has been a pretty incredible host so far.

In the spirit of friendly competition, Prime Minister, I want to say that it's my expectation that not only will the 2010 Olympics be just as successful as they were when they were hosted in Calgary; I also expect — I know the Prime Minister's family are big hockey fans — that we, in fact, will bring home the gold here in British Columbia when it comes to the Olympics.

So as a proud British Columbian, as a proud Canadian, I look forward to the next month. It's going to be a very exciting time for all of us, and I thank the Prime Minister for his remarks.

Routine Business

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, first of all, I want to indicate that we didn't do introduction of guests, but I would thank everybody that did attend today on behalf of all members, because it truly is a historic day in British Columbia.

I want to thank the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper, for being here today; the Premier of British Columbia for his comments; the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition for her comments. I think that British Columbians can truly be proud of what's taken place here today. I think that this Legislative Assembly and all the members can be truly proud of what took place here today.

With that, I think we've got to get on with the business of the day.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

KERSLEY MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCTION OF *LIL ABNER*

B. Simpson: How would you feel if your government thought your community was so obscure, unknown and poverty-stricken that it was the most unnecessary place in the country? What would you do if your elected representative introduced a law to drop an atomic bomb on your town? Well, you'd simply sing, dance and fight to save your beloved community. At least, that's what you'd do if you were part of a cast of almost a hundred in this year's Kersley Musical Theatre's production of *Lil Abner*.

Once again, Janice Butler and Cathy Heinzelman brought together an amazing cast and crew made up of both experienced and brand-new actors, ranging in ages from the very young to the forever young, all with a shared desire to warm the hearts of their audiences during another Cariboo winter.

[1410]

Richard Sutton and Lacey MacDonald were brilliant as *Lil Abner* and Daisy Mae. Don Peeke Vout shone as Marryin' Sam. Gary Minnet and Raielle Perry were hilarious as Pappy and Mammy Yokum. Brent Paulsen

and Jody Ballinger gave outstanding performances as General Bullmoose and Appassionata Von Climax. Jonathan Simpson and Jonathan Matheson enthralled audiences as Earthquake McGoon and Evil Eye Fleegle.

While the parody of American life depicted in *Lil Abner* was set in the 1930s, the main theme of the story resonated with the hundreds of Cariboo residents who enjoyed the play during its two-week run. In a region devastated by the mountain pine beetle, with its forestry and agriculture industries in a daily struggle for survival and with regular announcements of reductions in public services, Kersley Musical Theatre's reminder to the people of the Cariboo to fight for what we hold dear about where we choose to live was as timely as it was entertaining.

I ask the House to please join me in once again recognizing the talent and unflagging community spirit of the entire cast and crew of Kersley Musical Theatre.

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY IN WEST VANCOUVER—SEA TO SKY AREA

J. McIntyre: On day 105 of the torch relay, at the journey's end, I rise to pay tribute to VANOC; to the torch relay sponsors, Royal Bank and Coca-Cola; to all the hundreds of local organizing committees and many, many volunteers who succeeded in an event that has done more to electrify and unify our country, I think, than any other event in our peacetime history — 12,000 torchbearers from sea to sea to shining sea.

The personal memories from my 14 relay stops in the constituency will be cherished forever, from the children's faces at Brackendale Elementary, when they were dressed up in red and white and had hoops with the Olympic colours waving flags; to the logger that took the torch up the pole in the loggers sports arena in Squamish, an Olympic first; to the whole town of Lions Bay decked out in anticipation of the torch arrival; and to the sun breaking through the clouds as the runner came to the large inukshuk in the Olympic Park in Callaghan Valley; and also to the thousands and thousands that turned out to our three celebration sites in Whistler, Squamish and West Vancouver.

The most poignant memories are of the First Nations communities I visited and to see the youth in red and white rooting for Canada. From the first touchdown of the torch in the first Four Host First Nations territory that took place at Totem Hall in Squamish when they blessed the torch, to the candlelight ceremony at the Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre when one Squamish youth passed the torch to the Lil'wat youth, and to the opening of the community centre when the Lil'wat blessed the torch as it came through the Mount Currie reserve, all these memories are amazing.

I believed in this when I was in Prague in 2003. I knew what this would do for British Columbia and

Canada. I am so proud, and I want to rise in tribute to all Canadians who brought new meaning to the phrase "with glowing hearts."

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION PROGRAM IN SOOKE SCHOOL DISTRICT

J. Horgan: I rise today to congratulate all of those associated with the aboriginal education program offered in the Sooke school district, district 62. This program offers support and mentorship to all aboriginal students living both off reserve and on reserves in Pacheedaht, Scia'new and T'Sou-ke, encouraging them to take pride in their culture, their history and their traditions.

Aboriginal enhancement agreements, hiring aboriginal teachers, clustering aboriginal students — it seems pretty simple, hon. Speaker. If you put the right formula in place, you're going to get success, and that's what we get in school district 62. Through hard work and determination, aboriginal student graduation rates in the district are rising. Last year alone 68 percent of First Nations students achieved their Dogwood. That's up from 49 percent the year before.

These results are the fifth-highest in the province and the highest among suburban districts — quite an accomplishment. Hon. Speaker, you can only imagine what it would be like in my district if there was a brand-new high school instead of the Belmont School we have, held together by duct tape and crowded hallways.

[1415]

Fortunately, I was able to attend an event at John Stubbs Memorial School, a new school built in my term in office in the riding of the member for Esquimalt–Royal Roads, and we celebrated aboriginal achievement. Eight hundred students from throughout the district were there, represented with their hands on the wall — aboriginal drumming, aboriginal culture, and stories were told. It was a truly wonderful evening and a wonderful event. I want to encourage all members of this House to join with me in celebrating aboriginal education in the Sooke district and encouraging the government to fund the Belmont replacement project.

OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY IN CARIBOO-CHILCOTIN AREA

D. Barnett: On January 28 the Olympic Torch Relay came to the Cariboo-Chilcotin, starting in Lone Butte, where the highway was filled with school children, youth, citizens from all walks of life with welcome signs, Canadian flags, noisemakers and a spirit I have not seen for a long time.

On to 100 Mile House where the hometown Olympic rower Gabriel Bergen lit the cauldron while his proud parents and a whole community with a sea of red cheered on. On to the 108, where the community were on their porches and the streets, waving and cheering. At Lac la

Hache, further down Highway 97, the torch carried on the spirit of a community ever so beaming.

From there to 150 Mile to the First Nations community and then on to the Williams Lake Stampede grounds to a crowd like the mayor had never seen before. When hometown Deb Radolla carried the torch into the arena and lit the cauldron, the emotions were overwhelming.

On January 29 the torch was lit again at the Williams Lake city hall to a crowd of well-wishers as it travelled on. Driving down the highway, in communities along the way to Quesnel, there were well-wishers everywhere. As I drove into Quesnel, you could again feel a community full of spirit and excitement. I know now why Quesnel has a spirit square for community gatherings. As Dennis Baptiste, their community torchbearer, came down the street with the torch, the cheers were overwhelming.

To all the volunteers, torchbearers, VANOC and, yes, to all the communities, what a great event to show the world that the Cariboo-Chilcotin is full of spirit. When an event comes to our communities, that makes us feel proud we are Canadians — yes, and British Columbians who live in the best place on earth.

GREATER VICTORIA CITIZENS COUNSELLING CENTRE

R. Fleming: I want to talk briefly today about an extremely valuable non-profit society which is located in my constituency of Victoria–Swan Lake. I'm referring to the Greater Victoria Citizens Counselling Centre.

The Citizens Counselling Centre is strongly committed to providing affordable, quality, accessible volunteer counselling services to over 1,200 adult community members in greater Victoria each year. The centre believes that every person has the right to access quality counselling services, regardless of their ability to pay, and they have a sliding fee scale based on family income. The centre believes that people are resourceful and are capable of making choices and decisions for themselves. They focus on helping clients find their own solutions and the means to make constructive changes in their lives.

The centre is powered by over 150 volunteer counsellors that attend to a growing list of clients. Most volunteers have taken the centre's ten-month intensive training program. Some are professionals with advanced degrees and training, and some are practicum students obtaining graduate degrees in counselling. All of these volunteers offer their service on a volunteer basis, and all work is under the supervision of the centre's contracted professional supervisors.

The model has been successful at delivering much-needed care to over 21,000 people since its inception in 1969. This past year has perhaps been the Citizens Counselling Centre's toughest in four decades financially. But they are keeping the lights on, they are keeping wellness alive in my community, and they are serving the community well into the future.

I would invite all members of this House to join me in thanking executive director Brenda Wilson, her staff and the hundreds of individuals who make valuable contributions and commitments of their time to volunteer at this society in my community.

[1420]

OLYMPIC TRAINING IN COMOX VALLEY AND SUPPORT FOR GHANAIAN ATHLETE

D. McRae: Mr. Speaker, 26 Olympic teams from 15 countries are performing their final Olympic preparations in the Comox Valley. Our premier facility, Mount Washington, has experienced monumental snowfall, creating perfect conditions for athletes to train on its slopes and its cross-country trails, all the while taking advantage of our world-class Nordic facility.

One individual who has taken advantage of these conditions is Kwame Nkrumah-Acheampong, the one-man ski team from Ghana. I had the pleasure of meeting Kwame in the Comox Valley last week, and his story is truly inspirational.

He started skiing only six years ago on an artificial slope in England and qualified last year racing in the Iranian national development championships. While I am proud of Kwame's accomplishments, I also know he would not be competing in the 2010 Olympics without the efforts of the people of the Comox Valley.

Tourism Mount Washington manager Sarah Nicholson met Kwame at a ski show in London, England, last year. While the government of Ghana had not financed Kwame's efforts, the Comox Valley has. Mount Washington and Dianne Hawkins of the Comox Valley Chamber of Commerce helped organize local businesses to help sponsor Kwame's training in the Comox Valley. Garf Baxandall Ford sponsored a Ford Flex vehicle for the Ghana team to use during the Olympics, and the support comes in and comes in and comes in.

But that's not all. Athletes and their entourages will experience all the Comox Valley has to offer. They'll shop in our stores, eat in our restaurants and stay in our hotels. Better yet, athletes from around the world will return to their homes and carry with them the positive memories from the time spent at Mount Washington.

I would ask the House to join me in recognizing all the hard work the Comox Valley has done to attract teams to Vancouver Island, boosting our local economy. Most of all: go, Canada, go!

Oral Questions

OVERSIGHT OF OIL AND GAS INDUSTRY

J. Horgan: In May 2008 this Legislature passed the Oil and Gas Activities Act with no debate. It was passed by closure on the last day of the session in the spring

of 2008. This morning the Auditor General released a report, *Oil and Gas Site Contamination Risks: Improved Oversight Needed*.

It's been 15 years since the oil and gas sector really took off in British Columbia. The Oil and Gas Commission appears to be ill-equipped to do compliance and oversight activity on behalf of British Columbians.

My question to the Minister of Energy is quite a simple one. Will we heed the words of the throne speech and further deregulate this industry and drill, baby, drill, or will the minister stand in his place, protect the environment, protect public health and ensure that appropriate oversight and compliance can be done with the Oil and Gas Commission?

Hon. B. Lekstrom: I want to assure you that we will manage the oil and gas industry properly. We will manage it in a way that actually respects the land on which we live in the northeast part of this province and anywhere else that industry will operate. We will protect the environment in which it operates, and I think we've done a tremendous job.

It's interesting when you talk about what takes place in the oil and gas industry, when in fact, the Oil and Gas Commission was established in 1998 under a regime that you were a key part of, Member. It's interesting to point out that we have gained a lot of experience since those days.

We have moved forward. We developed some of the best regulations and continue to enhance those regulations through the Oil and Gas Activities Act that will be enhanced and brought forward this spring.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

J. Horgan: Well, the oil and gas sector has taken off, but the Oil and Gas Commission has stood still. I asked the minister in estimates this past fall how it could be that there would be a deficit at the Oil and Gas Commission when it's supposed to be funded by revenues from that sector. Clearly, there's disarray in the northeast, the minister's back yard.

The Oil and Gas Commission is cited today by the Auditor General as not meeting its responsibilities for reporting transparently and reporting on site decommissioning and restoration. These are significant issues. They may be commonplace to the minister in his back yard, but British Columbians need answers.

Will the minister commit today to implementing all the recommendations in the Auditor General's report?

[1425]

Hon. B. Lekstrom: Well, I just want to point out the fact that I've lived in the northeast all of my life. My family lives there. Our children are there. The implication that we don't care about what goes on up there.... You can

reiterate it from someone who lives down here, but I can tell you that the men and women that work in the oil and gas industry are proud of what they do; they're proud of the job they do on behalf of all British Columbians.

I do want to point out that although he is quick to look at parts of the report, we've just seen it here this morning. I will quote something. It says: "Nevertheless, I have reason to be encouraged about the situation. At the completion of our audit, some initiatives were underway."

Also, the '04-05 follow-up report to the '02-03 report that was done on contaminated sites in British Columbia.... With all due respect to the Auditor General, I do want to point out that there were three total recommendations.

You may not want to hear this....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. B. Lekstrom: Fully implemented one; substantially implemented two.

We do our job. We're proud of the job we do, and the people in the northeast are proud to be able to contribute to the economic well-being of this province.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a further supplemental.

J. Horgan: I'll quote from the report as well: "I had expected more progress because this is not the first audit dealing with contaminated sites in British Columbia."

It's delightful that the public affairs bureau could get that one line, that one line out of 40 pages, to protect the minister's backside. The reality is that public health and safety and the environment are at risk because you're underfunding the Oil and Gas Commission. It was put in place, quite rightly, in 1998 so that we could take off with this sector.

You've dropped the ball, Minister. It's in your back yard. Pick it up. Implement these recommendations, and do it today.

Hon. B. Lekstrom: I guess you weren't listening to the last one. You probably have your mind on the Olympics, like most people do.

But what you've just quoted.... As I said previously, the report that you just talked about and the quote that he talks about in the office's 2002-2003 report on provincial contaminated sites raised similar issues. Unfortunately, and I do mean this with all due respect to the Auditor General, he may not...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. B. Lekstrom: ...have taken the opportunity to read his own report of '04-05, report No. 8, follow-up to the '02-

03 report on managing contaminated sites, where on page 7 it talks about: total recommendations — three; fully implemented — one; substantially implemented — two.

We've dealt with those issues. We're going to continue to move forward with the oil and gas industry and do it in a way everybody in British Columbia is proud of.

R. Fleming: A week ago the Oil and Gas Commission reported on a major sour gas leak at an EnCana well site from last fall. The findings detail major equipment failure for early gas detection and shutoff, failure of emergency response systems, and evacuation procedures for residents that were not followed.

EnCana is our largest gas producer in this province. They should have the best-maintained well sites, the best equipment and best emergency response systems in the industry. But this incident shows that their failure may be part of a bigger systemic problem.

Given the severity of these facts, what is the minister doing to strengthen safety in the oil and gas industry so that human lives aren't put at risk again from incidents like this?

Hon. B. Lekstrom: We are actually working closely. The Oil and Gas Commission just held a public meeting last night talking about their report with their recommendations that they're putting forward. They were seeking input from the public.

Without question, this was a very serious issue that took place at this site, and we are very fortunate that nobody was injured. But to put it in perspective, each and every day the people of the northeast, the men and women that work in that industry, go out with the intent to do the best job they can to ensure the safety of the men and women they work with and the families that live in the region.

If there are things we can do each and every day to improve upon what we do with industry or what we do in our day-to-day lives, I want to assure the minister here today and the member across that we will do everything in our power to make sure that as we extract the resources that benefit this great province, we'll do it in a way that's sustainable, environmentally sound and, first and foremost, safe for the people that live in the region.

[1430]

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

R. Fleming: The minister is being very generous today, Mr. Speaker. But I want to come back to this incident, because he finished his answer talking about the men and women who work in the industry. Nobody is questioning that. We're talking about an incident that happened in this industry that is very serious. Animals and livestock died from this major leak, which went undetected by EnCana for seven hours.

Some residents, in evacuating their homes, inhaled concentrated hydrogen sulphide and are now experiencing scorched lungs and other health problems. The Oil and Gas Commission has no ability to make findings on human and animal health and safety issues that arise from incidents like these.

The Oil and Gas Commission can't even impose fines in cases where they find negligence when laws and regulations are violated. The minister can; the Oil and Gas Commission cannot.

This is the question for the minister. Will the minister expand the Oil and Gas Commission's powers and their organizational capacity so that the people of northeastern B.C. are living safely, and the industry is properly monitored and operating safely in this province?

Hon. B. Lekstrom: Through to the member, I want to just let him know that many animals didn't die. People weren't harmed. There was an individual who has felt that there may be an impact. There's nothing to that yet. Certainly, we take the issue very seriously. I know that the member must be a heavy cattle rancher and understands the cattle industry, but you're speaking of something that I think you know very little about, to be honest with you.

The issue.... We actually.... This spring....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Take your seat.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Continue, Minister.

Hon. B. Lekstrom: Once again, I mean, the question.... As much as this is about politics in here, this is a serious issue that we're dealing with.

This is a place where I've grown up. My friends and my family are there. Many of my friends work in the industry, and many of my friends live in the area that was affected by this. So to think that people don't take it seriously is wrong.

But the other issue is that we have the Oil and Gas Activities Act coming into play this spring. The regulations will be there, which strengthen the ability for the Oil and Gas Commission as well, but we continue to build on the regulations we have that govern this industry.

I do want to reiterate. For those of you who may think that this industry actually isn't regulated, it is. We have some of the best regulations in the world governing the oil and gas industry. We do it very well. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, through to the members and the people of British Columbia: we benefit a great deal from the oil

and gas industry, and we're going to continue to receive that benefit.

B. Ralston: My question is to the minister on the same report. The report points out, the Auditor General, that there is a potential liability hanging over the province of approximately \$1 billion. This relates to the fact that if operators of inactive wells either go out of business or there's a significant ownership change, they may no longer be in the position to financially pay for a cleanup. In that case, that cleanup would then fall upon the province. The Auditor General clearly points this out in the report.

Can the minister explain what he's done to deal with this estimated \$1 billion liability — the Auditor General says he really hasn't done that much so far — and what he plans to do in the future?

Hon. B. Lekstrom: To bring the member up to speed on what takes place in the Oil and Gas Commission, it was our government that implemented an orphan well fund to look after orphaned wells in this province. Presently we have roughly 20,400 well sites in this province. A little over 10,000 are active. Out of that, less than 0.02 percent or 38 of those 20,400 sites have been orphaned. We're continuing to clean those up. We've prioritized them, and we'll do what we can. We're starting with private land.

[1435]

But let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, when the opposition was in power in the 1990s, they didn't give a hoot about orphaned wells.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members.
The member has a supplemental.

B. Ralston: Well, the point that the Auditor General makes is rather contrary to what the minister is saying here. He says that the financial reserve of the fund that the minister refers to isn't adequate to deal with the financial risk that the industry poses.

One of the ways that the Oil and Gas Commission could reduce the future liability to the province for future cleanup of inactive wells would be to demand higher deposits from oil and gas operators. At present the sum required as a deposit is \$7,500 — not per well but per company. The Auditor General suggests that a more appropriate amount would be \$100,000 per well.

Is the minister prepared to consider that recommendation of the Auditor General and begin to remove the risk of the huge financial liability the industry poses for the province?

Hon. B. Lekstrom: We always will look at the Auditor General's report, take the recommendations and see what needs to be done.

But before everybody on the other side gets too righteous, I do want to point out the fact that you didn't have an orphan well fund when you had the Oil and Gas Commission. There was oil and gas drilling going on at that time. I find it extremely interesting that it becomes an issue now, when you forgot to do it in the 1990s.

CALL FOR INQUIRY RE MISSING AND
MURDERED ABORIGINAL WOMEN

D. Routley: Earlier today just outside on the steps of the Legislature there assembled a small group of First Nations people. They were here hoping to be heard by the Prime Minister and the Premier of this government. They were heard by a few of the opposition members but no one else, unfortunately.

They were here in a place where we heard lots of lofty words about our commitment to this country. We've heard lofty words about the commitment to reconciliation with First Nations.

They were here to remind us that according to them, over 3,000 aboriginal women have gone missing over the last 30 years in Canada. Officially, barely more than 500 of those are recognized.

What they are asking and what I'm asking the Deputy Premier to support right now is a public inquiry into the status of those women.

Hon. M. de Jong: I can't think of anything more devastating than to lose a loved one, except perhaps to lose a loved one and not know what has become of them. For far too many families — mothers, sisters, daughters, brothers, sons — that is a situation they find themselves in.

Investigating authorities have applied themselves and continue to do so with diligence to find an answer to that question too many of those families and family members have, which is: what happened to my loved ones? That work is continuing, it will continue, and they will continue to apply themselves with all due diligence and sense of importance.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

D. Routley: Well, unfortunately, words of commitment on this issue have fallen hollow to the ground for these people. They assure us that they have been ignored.

There has been no public inquiry. There has been no grand effort on the part of government to discover what has happened to these people, these women.

These are families who have lost track of their loved ones. They go to bed at night, and they don't know where they are or what their circumstances are. This is a serious human rights issue, and it demands that this government take a solid step.

Again, I ask the Deputy Premier: will he support today in this House an immediate public inquiry into the status of those missing women?

[1440]

Hon. M. de Jong: For those families, there is one overriding question to which they continue to want to have an answer, and that is: what happened to my loved ones? That is a question that, if there is an answer, will be uncovered by those we charge with the responsibility for investigating disappearances. That work is ongoing.

Nothing I can say in this chamber will satisfy a family who has lost a loved one and has no answers. But what I can do is assure them that the investigating authorities, the police, continue to investigate and will leave no stone unturned. Hopefully, case by case, family by family, we will find answers to account for the loss that they have suffered.

M. Mungall: The First Nations representatives who were here today noted that there are many solutions to prevent the violence that takes their mothers, their daughters, their sisters, their aunties and friends from their communities. We know that the police are doing whatever they can. But the solutions that they spoke of need real government involvement, real government action and real government implementation.

The representatives from First Nations communities want a public inquiry. They want to know why. They want to know how we can stop this. So the question is: will the Deputy Premier today, on this day, commit to a public inquiry for the missing and murdered aboriginal women of this province?

Hon. M. de Jong: I've had occasion in the course of fulfilling various duties in this chamber, as Attorney General and as the minister responsible for aboriginal relations, to meet with some of the people directly affected. The member is correct about the concern they have expressed with respect to individual cases and the underlying reasons that may account for some of those cases.

The work the government is doing in partnership with leadership within First Nations communities is designed to address some of those underlying reasons, to bridge those socioeconomic gaps that for too long have separated aboriginal and non-aboriginal Canadians. That is the grand issue that we have as a challenge, which we as a government and I hope all members and think all members want to work on.

In the meantime there are, of course, individual families who are confronted by very personal tragedies, and the investigating authorities will continue to work to try and find answers for them as well.

B. Simpson: While I respect and believe that the Attorney General's feelings are genuine about the individual families, the grand issue, as he puts it, is the general case.

The minister knows, the Minister of Aboriginal Relations knows, that there have been marches, there have been vigils, and there have been resolutions passed by the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, by the Assembly of First Nations. There have been letters to the Premier and to the Prime Minister time and again asking that it's more than the individual cases. It's the general question of why so many aboriginal women are murdered and missing, particularly in the province of British Columbia.

So the question is about the general case. The Prime Minister said today that we need to learn the lessons of the past, and the best way to learn those lessons is through a fulsome public inquiry.

My question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Relations. Will the minister answer the call from all of the First Nations communities and all of their organizations to conduct an immediate public inquiry into missing and murdered women in British Columbia?

Hon. G. Abbott: As the Attorney General has said, these are many human cases, human loss, families I'm sure at wit's end with worry with respect to what has become of their children, their nieces, their daughters. It is a terrible human tragedy.

[1445]

I think the most important thing we can do at this point in time, as the Attorney General said, to resolve those many individual cases is to let the RCMP and other police forces that are involved in these investigations continue their work and try to get answers to those many families that are waiting for answers to those questions.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

B. Simpson: Well, the First Nations communities, their leadership and their organizations are all demanding that this government get the general answers that they so desperately want as to why so many aboriginal women are murdered and go missing in this province. The individual cases do need to be investigated, but the general case must also be inquired into, and that's all they're asking for.

I don't understand what the reluctance is. I do not understand why this government would not engage in the spirit of reconciliation and in the spirit of the new relationship to take on this task. The one thing that will come out of a public inquiry that will not come out of the individual cases is the ability to prevent this — to stop more aboriginal women from disappearing.

Again, will the Minister of Aboriginal Relations, who wants to put himself forward as a champion for First Nations in this province, stand with those First Nations and demand that the government conduct a public inquiry immediately?

Hon. G. Abbott: There may well be a time when an inquiry is appropriate. What we have currently is a

situation in British Columbia and a situation in Canada where many, many aboriginal women are either missing, feared dead or dead as a consequence of violence against them. It is important, I think, to ensure that the law enforcement officers have full opportunity to investigate all of those crimes, try to get answers to those crimes and try to bring to justice those who may have perpetrated those crimes.

That, I believe, is the most important thing that this House can do, that this province can do, that police officers can do, that families can do to get answers to those many, many questions that have arisen from the disappearance of aboriginal women.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

M. Karagianis: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Children and Families about a letter that had been sent out to contracted services indicating there will be imminent cuts in services. Now, those agencies provide mental health supports, support services for families with special needs children, crisis lines, food banks, youth and child services.

So to the minister: I'd like to know which of these services are being targeted for cuts.

Hon. M. Polak: As I outlined yesterday in this House, we are in the midst of a very thorough consultation process. We are engaging all of our contracted agencies, and we are working with them to identify areas of priority.

What I can tell you is that we have determined areas that will be absolutely protected and not under review. Those are areas of child protective services — in other words, critical front-line services. Those are aboriginal agencies. Those are foster parents maintenance rates, and those are also services to children and youth with special needs. Those will not be within the scope of this review.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

M. Karagianis: You know, these services were devastated a number of years ago when this government went on a binge of cuts to agencies across this province that affected rural communities, outlying communities.

The minister has not in fact said that services like mental health supports for communities, the crisis line in the Kootenays, food bank services being offered by these agencies and other kinds of support services, therapies, are going to be protected.

Is the minister telling us today that these agencies' concern and anxiety is very rightfully founded in the fact that these services will be cut, which will devastate services in rural and remote communities and really will deeply affect families and children across this province? Are those services being cut?

[1450]

Hon. M. Polak: I want to first of all remind the member and remind this House that the budget for this ministry was increased by \$12 million this year. That puts us at an almost \$1.4 billion budget, a budget that is \$400 million more than it was in 2001.

While our ministry budget is not anticipated to decrease in this coming year, nevertheless we must respond to pressures that come to us from demand-driven portions of our ministry. That means that while we protect services such as maintenance rates to foster parents and protect services to children and youth with special needs, aboriginal agencies, nevertheless we need to work with our contracted agencies to identify ways in which we can manage our budget and still meet the needs and priorities of individual communities across British Columbia.

BUY B.C. PROGRAM

L. Popham: Will the Minister of Agriculture commit today to restore the Buy B.C. program?

Hon. S. Thomson: I'm sure the member knows that the Buy B.C. program continues to exist. The Buy B.C. program is under a sub-licensing agreement to the B.C. Agriculture Council, and we continue to work with both them and the B.C. Food Processors Association in promoting this industry.

Mr. Speaker, you need to know that in the last two days, we've taken great advantage of that opportunity. Yesterday I was with the First Nations Agricultural Association promoting the great work that they are doing in the agriculture area at the Olympics, showcasing the products there.

This morning I was with the federal Minister of Agriculture, showcasing both Canadian and B.C. agriculture to the international media, to the world, and we'll continue to do that during the Olympics. We've got 13 opportunities with the industry, with communities.

We're going to continue to promote this industry. It's a great industry. We produce the highest-quality, safest food products in the world, and we'll continue to promote B.C. consumers purchasing and supporting our local industry.

[End of question period.]

G. Coons: Presenting petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Petitions

G. Coons: I have a petition from 765 people from Haida Gwaii who demand that the *Northern Adventure* be taken off the Queen Charlotte run and be replaced

with the *Northern Expedition*, as that boat was made for the north coast waters.

Hon. J. Yap: I have a petition here from a constituent, Terry Girard, with 582 signatures in regards to provincial tax policy.

K. Conroy: I have a petition of over 1,200 signatures opposing the proposed changes to the hunting regulations regarding bull elk from limited-entry draw to general open season in the West Kootenay and harmonization of the whitetail and mule deer regulations.

D. McRae: I have a petition from 500 residents of the Comox Valley asking the government to reinstate all charitable gaming grants.

D. Donaldson: I rise to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

D. Donaldson: It's a petition with 389 names and 17 letters from Gitksan hereditary chiefs — that would be the equivalent of 400,000 people in Vancouver, on a proportional basis — calling for the Minister of Education, the Hon. Margaret MacDiarmid, to intervene to prevent the possible closure of South Hazelton Elementary School — calling on this government to prevent the closure of South Hazelton Elementary School.

Orders of the Day

Hon. M. de Jong: I call throne speech debate.

[1455]

Throne Speech Debate

(continued)

J. Slater: Mr. Speaker, in December I had the privilege of attending ground-breaking ceremonies at Senkulmen Enterprise Park with yourself, Chief Clarence Louie and Minister Stockwell Day to unveil the plans for the incredible and innovative green business park located north of Oliver on the Osoyoos Indian band lands. This is an example of a great partnership that we as government will continue with First Nations.

In my role as Parliamentary Secretary for Water Supply and Allocation, I have been around the province making presentations on the Living Water Smart program starting at the Union of B.C. Municipalities convention in September and then before the Cowichan Valley regional district board, Okanagan Basin Water Board, Okanagan Basin water stewardship committee, the drought management and planning workshop held on Kelowna, and the Southern Interior Stockman meetings.

[L. Reid in the chair.]

It was also exciting to launch our new blog on the Living Water Smart website. The blog has been created so that British Columbians have input into the Water Act modernization process and water concerns and issues in their areas. To date, the blog has been received very well, and we are receiving great input. Future Water Act modernization workshops are currently being planned throughout the province during the next couple of months.

February 12, 2010, will be a prominent date in British Columbia history, as it marks the end of the longest Olympic Torch Relay and the beginning of the largest event hosted by British Columbians — the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games. It has been said over and over to me that the Olympic Torch Relay is one of the things that has brought our country together, from coast to coast, to show our Canadian pride.

There is nothing more moving than watching the excitement of torchbearers as they await their turn to carry the torch. The torch relay went through ten communities in the Boundary-Similkameen area, beginning in Christina Lake. I had the opportunity to travel with the torch from Grand Forks, Greenwood, Midway, Rock Creek, stopping at Osoyoos overnight for the community celebration. I personally want to congratulate Gerald Davis and Jim Harrington and their volunteers for an awesome celebration.

As you may have seen on *CTV News* — and the Premier just mentioned it as well — the community torchbearer Tony Batista, our own Paralympian, proudly carried the torch through the crowd of 5,000 people and up the stairs to light the cauldron. When asked if he'd like to hold the torch, he replied: "Forever and ever and ever." Then Tony was asked if he'd like to say something. He emotionally replied that he wanted to say: "Thanks to my family." This moment will be memorable for Tony and his community when people speak of the torch.

The next day the torch relay began at 6:50 a.m. with Chief Clarence Louie starting the relay from the Nk'Mip Desert Cultural Centre and going through Oliver, OK Falls and Kaleden, the last community in my riding. I was on the roadside cheering on Tom Siddon when he received the flame and began his 300-metre run with his family running alongside him.

Each and every torchbearer will have their story to tell. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the following volunteers for their leadership in organizing the torch relay celebrations in their communities: Cher Wyers, Donna Durban, Martin Fromme, Elaine Kumar, Chris Scott, Linda Hampson, Janet Black and all their volunteers. Let's give a big spirit of B.C. thank-you to all of them and all the volunteers.

The spirit of Olympics is about not just the two weeks of competition in February but the years of preparation

since the bid was announced in 2003. The 2010 Legacies Now was created to build the spirit, the pride and the passion amongst the communities within British Columbia. This initiative encouraged communities to create their own Spirit of B.C. community committees comprised of volunteers who organized events and built awareness of healthy living and sport through the various programs that were offered through or in partnership with the 2010 Legacies Now.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the community of Princeton on being the GamesTown winner and the recipient of \$100,000. I was also in Princeton when the torch went through there, and they had a great crowd as well. It was just awesome.

[1500]

During the past five years government has invested more than \$655 million in sport infrastructure in British Columbia, including the Paralympic Training Centre in Kimberley where teams from four different countries are training prior to the Paralympic Games.

From Dawson Creek to Penticton, from the Comox Valley to Kamloops, communities are welcoming athletes from around the world to their towns and cities. Teams from more than 21 different countries are taking advantage of B.C.'s first-class sports venues, facilities and training centres.

In the Comox Valley 26 teams from 15 countries will train at Mount Washington leading up to the Olympic Games. In Vernon, Penticton and Kelowna teams from 14 countries are taking advantage of the ski hills, cross-country tracks and arenas. And in the Kootenays teams from nine countries are training on Panorama and Kimberley mountains. These teams and athletes are injecting money into local economies as they purchase food, accommodation and services, and rent training facilities.

Since 2005 government has provided almost \$12 million to support major sporting events around the province. Local sport teams are also benefiting. During their stay, some of the international teams are providing training opportunities for local athletes. In Abbotsford the Russian skating team will be offering a training clinic for the local skating club, and in Kelowna the midget girls hockey team will get to play an exhibition game against the visiting Swedish Olympic women's hockey team.

It has been estimated that over 250,000 visitors will take part in the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games, as well as three billion viewers from all around the world. I can't think of a better way to showcase our province, to let the world show everyone that we are the best place on earth.

G. Gentner: It's a great deal of pleasure to be here again to address my sixth throne speech. This is a time to celebrate the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and it's

an incredible time indeed, with all the spirit and the enthusiasm that is coming through all our communities.

To begin, I have to address the hardship — namely, that of the earthquake victims of Haiti, the 250,000 who have possibly died, and the numbers are still being counted; the injured, the homeless — and the wonderful contributions made not only by all Canadians but, in particular, British Columbians and our communities, mine included.

I have to acknowledge the efforts of many in my community, including Red FM and Sher-e-Punjab radio stations, which raised close to \$1 million themselves. I'd like to say thank you to them and thank you to all who've worked so hard.

The Olympics are here, and we see the incredible Olympic spirit. On the eve of the Olympics I want to address, for the record, how this whole thing came about, because I think it's very important. The throne speech talked at great length about it, and so it should, and I'm going to address it as such.

Now, two days ago in North Delta about 15,000 people — namely, families and children — lined the streets of my constituency, and later the community hosted a pre-Olympic women's hockey game between the ever fast-skating Finnish team and the very defensive Slovakian team. It was a great event. I'd like to mention and give special thanks to the municipality of Delta for going beyond the call of duty in sponsoring the torch relay and the hockey game.

Also, what is not acknowledged is that, though there are many communities that receive the Olympic highlight and all the accolades, few understand the essential role that Delta is playing. Because of security issues it hasn't been revealed, but now that the venues are well underway, I can safely share what Delta is doing in hosting the games. Delta, my friends, is doing the bull work. It is providing the venues for Whistler, Richmond, Vancouver and communities. Where they are basking in the Olympic sun, little Delta, you see, is really staging the area for the games infrastructure.

For the past two years it's been the host, the location for all the venue storage, the warehousing of all the essential logistics: the tents, the stands, the fencing used, the bollards, traffic and safety control equipment, flags, etc., the stores operations, upkeep, computers, radios, technical support, office equipment, furnishing, clothing, hundreds of thousands of square feet of space and inventory, bookkeeping — all those things that you take for granted but that are essential in making a successful games.

[1505]

I'd also like to thank the contributions of my colleague from Delta South, who has been very enthusiastic and supportive of the games and the municipality of Delta's well-meaning efforts.

You know, politicians — particularly this government and, I'd say, this Premier — are there for the photo ops.

But in typical B.C. Liberal tradition of ribbon cutting and repeated announcements of capital projects, the real stuff behind government is the daily fix and maintain, the infrastructure, the operations of government, of a business, of even providing a successful Olympics.

Now I have to get on the record with this, because success in government or running a business is measured by what you can do on a day-to-day basis. The street cleaner, the waste collector, the volunteers, the traffic control flagpeople, most who won't even see the games, are the real heroes during the next two weeks. I say this not because of the partisan nature of our politics, but because I get a little incensed by the over-the-top attitude of the ever media-seeking B.C. Liberals and Premier who believe that they have the licence to somehow personalize the games as though they are theirs and theirs alone.

Well, the games are not for them alone. That, in part, is what I want to talk about because, while in my community, between the two venues — the torch relay and the hockey game — I went into my constituency offices that day because the throne speech was being delivered, and I watched it from my constituency office.

I saw and heard the importance of the throne speech, and while I was waiting.... My community TV station, Delta TV, didn't broadcast it. They had forgotten that they actually did that kind of thing. I had to phone to make sure that it was on. Thank God we have Hansard, because I went to my computer and watched it there. It sort of sums up the lack of interest, if you will, of the throne speech. I think that's an unfortunate situation.

In its opening the throne speech focused on the Olympics, and it said: "Thousands of designers, tradespeople, contractors, volunteers and professionals have made this happen. To all those who helped deliver these games — the visionaries, volunteers, trainers, coaches, athletes, elected officials, public servants and community groups — British Columbians say thank you."

Now, while watching the kids who all are excited at watching the torch go by, I thought about who was really responsible for the games, the so-called visionaries. I thought: "It can't be a Premier on a zip line beating his chest like some Stockwell Day riding on a skidoo in a wetsuit. There has got to be more than that."

I have nothing against boosterism, but the egocentric nation of the self-centred Liberal government has forgotten the reason why we're staging the games. I say this, knowing that the Prime Minister is here bursting through the doors today and saying all those grand, wonderful things.

I'm sorry, Mr. Premier. These games, again, are not about you. They're about the Olympic spirit — an Olympic spirit that strives to inspire and motivate the youth of the world to be the best they can. You know, as Geoff Dembicki said in a recent *Tyee* article about the Olympics: "But whether you're talking the 1990s or the 21st century, you're always going to find the civic

leaders and leaders in general who see these games as something beneficial for their city — not to mention their own reputation."

Since the first modern Olympics in Athens in 1896 the operative question or word has always been: who will pay for the future games? The games went from amateur to professional athletes and then to corporate sponsorship. Then came the financial disasters and the terrorist acts, and then came Montreal — or as Dembicki says, Mayor Jean Drapeau famously promised the spectacle. I quote the mayor then. He said that Montreal can no more have a deficit than a man can have a baby. He was only half right, of course. Montreal finally settled its \$1.5 billion tab in the year 2006.

Now we have the two corporate games with our own censor cops sneaking around, looking for unauthorized signage or a well-established restaurant that has long incorporated their identity with the Olympic tag, or the harassment and detainment of a journalist like Amy Goodman at our border.

[1510]

Of course, the biggest irony is the Vancouver police seizure of a million dollars' worth of illegal goods that brazenly displayed the Olympic logo without permission. The product — more than 100,000 Ecstasy pills stamped with the five rings. The irony? North America's capital of substance abuse and mental illness is here. Are we more concerned about the illegal solicitation of drugs or the unsolicited use of the five rings embedded on a pill?

While I watched the throne speech and the ongoing self-gratification on the other side, I couldn't help but wonder: where did this idea really start in British Columbia? What was the original intent of it, since it was the opening feature of the throne speech?

To the chest-beaters, let's look at *Hansard*, December 1, 1998, the hon. Ian Waddell:

"I rise today as Minister responsible for sports. Today, at 9:30 Pacific Standard Time, ballots of the Canadian Olympic Committee, representing 72 winter and summer sports and officials, were counted in Toronto to decide the winning Canadian bid for the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. On the first ballot, it was 26 votes for Vancouver-Whistler, 25 for Quebec City and 21 for Calgary. Calgary dropped off. On the second ballot, after our hearts stopped for a few minutes — or a few seconds — they announced.... It certainly seemed like a lot of minutes.

"On the second ballot, the results were Quebec City, 31, and Vancouver-Whistler, 40. Thus, Vancouver-Whistler won the Canadian bid."

So all bravado on the other side.... Let me remind you where the games started from.

But regarding the intent, this is what the minister, the NDP minister responsible for sports, said:

"These games will be for our young people who are taking part in various sports right now. They will be just the right age to compete for their country and to compete at home, as Nancy Greene Raine said today. Can you imagine what an incredible honour this will be?"

I had to remind the members opposite where it started, for the record, when they and the Premier beat their chests.

I quote Mr. Waddell:

"This victory was a result of an incredible team effort: athletes, business, government officials working together. It was a great show of confidence in British Columbia. We worked together as a team, and we succeeded as a team. Today I pledge to members of this House that the benefits of this bid and these games, when we win the international bid in 2003 — when that decision is made — will be spread around the province of British Columbia. Will the House join with me today in congratulating the Vancouver-Whistler bid team, led by Arthur Griffiths and his team."

Recognizing that the goal of the Olympic movement is to build a peaceful and better world by educating the youth of the world through sport practised without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding promoted by friendship, solidarity and fair play....

That's for the record. But it started well before this announcement. You know, except for the cancelled Olympics in Denver in the 1970s, there was a lobby to bring the games to Whistler because Denver pulled out at the last second, but we weren't quite ready then.

I'm sure there were many contributing sources who will tell you how these games came about, but my awareness converges in the early 1990s. I have with me an original proposal sent to the government of the day in October 1995. At first it suggested a summer Olympiad, namely because of the need of a thought of a one location logistic dynamic centred in Vancouver, as opposed to stretching out that infrastructure. It considered other venues — which, in hindsight, may have been the way to go, but here we are today. But this is where the seed was planted.

There are some nuggets of insight in its form. I want to look at the proposal that government received and share it with you. "The licence to promote the world's first sustainable tourist economy is through the Olympic world stage. Yes, we can stage Olympics. Yes, it can be debt-free." That is how it was prefaced.

"Downturns in primary resource economies have encouraged the provincial economic planning strategy of diversifying, including the fostering of a larger tourist economy." "Downturns in primary resource economies have encouraged a provincial economic planning strategy of diversifying."

Interesting. Downturns in resource economies in 1995 never foresaw the devastating situation we have with this government of a 60 percent drop in forestry output in one year alone.

[1515]

What we've witnessed is a loss of \$2 billion worth of surplus revenue from the forest industry today. We now, of course, see this phony wood-first policy being announced by this government.

But let's take us back to 1995. Back then this was seen as a vehicle to enhance our forest industry, to give you one aspect of the nature of this proposal — now, not even enough. We do not even see enough to pay from the forest industry for the forest industry alone, the

ministry itself. It's been a complete disaster. Things are much worse today than they were in the 1990s.

I quote further from this proposal. "Downturns in primary resource economies have encouraged a provincial economic planning strategy of diversifying, including the fostering of a larger tourist economy." That was the general premise of the proposal in 1995 — fostering a larger tourist economy.

What has happened today? We're seeing the complete cut, the gutting of Tourism B.C. It's been expunged. Now is the time we should be rallying for the tourist dollar for the future, and we have cut it to its core. It's gone. What a lost opportunity, of course. I won't go on much longer about the budget cuts to the ministry responsible for tourism as well, but it's been devastating.

Back to the report. "Supernatural British Columbia, 1995, offers the world a clean recreational playground." I have to think about the ongoing pollution in my community, the South Fraser perimeter road, the freeways, the carbon, the loss of passive recreation, the cuts to the ministry where our parks are now falling apart. Of course, let's not forget about Cypress Mountain and the carbon footprint in order to move snow.

I go back to the report. Vancouver "is a world-class tourist centre and has the capacity of hosting the Olympics." Well, will it become a world-class tourist centre when we are losing our cruise ship industry to Seattle? We built a whole brand-new pier. Will it be filled with cruise ships?

Speaking of cruise ships, and I quote this report of 1995: "In this growing tourist-based economy, Vancouver offers hotels, grand and small, elegant and affordable, with the capacity to expand in hotel availability and the aid of a harbour facilitating cruise ships. Barcelona found an additional 2,500 hotel rooms through cruise ships."

It was a suggestion way back then, but as we know, Barcelona did it. Yet we couldn't even organize a cruise ship that could look after and help provide for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

"The new expanded international airport testifies to Vancouver's growth as a destination centre and its accessibility to the world." Here we are later with a billion dollars spent on YVR improvement fees. A billion dollars went into it, and you know, when you get through security, you can't find a chair to get re-dressed, to sit down and put your shoes back on — a billion dollars. I think that some place they call it.... It's not a word, but I call it recombobulation — when you have the ability to get re-dressed and look after yourself. An expanded airport has accessibility to the world, but we're also seeing smaller airport closures.

Back to the report. It recognizes "a choice of ethnic restaurants, unmatched anywhere, provides Vancouverites with one of the richest food provisions and cuisine experiences in the world." Yet we see the ministry ActNow,

or the ministry of broccoli, whereby \$100,000 is spent annually on junk food. I mean, check out *Public Accounts*. It's quite a hypocrisy. In fact, they're gutting that ministry as we speak.

The proposal lists available venues, including convention centres — plural. Boy, whoever thought of that one? I don't know if that was a good idea, but they did. They're way ahead of it. GM Place and B.C. Place, etc., and its cultural and arts capacities. It did not, of course, anticipate Intrustwest and Fortress and the bankruptcy issues because it wasn't necessarily contemplated then.

It questioned the need for B.C. Place to conform to standards. Now, that's kind of a little foreshadowing way back in 1995. Of course, you know what happened to B.C. Place, and we're going to be seeing the bulldozers very shortly. There was a suggestion then that we should be putting money into it. How could the author possibly have known about a needed roof repair way back in 1995? Maybe the author was Kreskin. I don't know, but it's amazing.

[1520]

"The building of an Olympic village in southeast False Creek." The concept was there, way back then. How could the study have guessed it back in 1995? It went on to say: "A plan may be initiated to reclaim the southeast foreshore of False Creek, currently zoned industrial." Here was the catch: an Olympic village "may provide future low-cost housing in east Mount Pleasant." That was the concept, not gentrification. That was the vision that started this whole thing.

Yes, we were going to put money into infrastructure. But it was going to be for everybody, not major corporations and major developers. Interesting how the Olympic village was created for a need for social housing, and it's now being displaced. People are being displaced. The poor are being displaced through huge mega condominium projects. Now, of course, we have seen the privatization — P3s, the village, etc., — and how the price has gone up.

Here's something else the study said: "The cost of staging should be under serious examination." Serious examination means complete, open, transparent auditing. Today we have an impasse between the Auditor General and the government's comptroller general arguing over what the actual costs are. Should the Sea to Sky Highway be part of it? The government says no, and yet the members opposite talk about how wonderful it is because of the Olympics.

Security costs. Of course, it didn't anticipate 9/11, but we certainly knew about what happened in Munich. It went on to warn: "The cost to stage an Olympics should be under serious examination. The major problem of rising costs of each games is based on national regional pride, which attempts to outdo former host cities. On such a world stage, showmanship can be a costly endeavour." It's a warning sign. I don't think we adhered to it.

But you know, the Premier gives us the true costs. Will he give us the true costs of his travel when it's all over? The tickets spent not only by various Crown corporations but by the government itself? The costs of recreational dining, the jet set executive costs, the hidden costs — are we going to find those out? The costs of your face, the government's face, before that of the athletes?

This show is not supposed to be about the Premier or the members opposite or even the members here. A few original intuitive letters to get the games going by people who were thinking about putting the city, the province, the athletes, tourism and the people ahead of politicians — not this personal dog-and-pony show that we've been witnessing for the last year.

I quote from the study, October 1995: "Vancouver and B.C. already offer the world an Olympic Games program in a modern, natural setting." We have it, but did we garner and did we plan an Olympics around this advantage?

The Premier lets the people in their natural settings sell.... He thinks he can sell the games. I talked about the Premier zipping along clotheslines, but it's all for cameras. The marketing of the games should be done by the athletes and children, the families, the people — not photo ops for politicians.

Quote from the report: "The Vancouver games can provide a cost-effective, no-frills debt-free, back-to-basics Olympics." That was a recommendation. That was the goal — a cost-effective, no-frills, debt-free and back-to-basics Olympics. That's what the NDP government heard.

How many working families will be able to afford this escapade debt-free? Corporate sponsors are here to make billions of dollars. Who will pay for most of it for the rest of their lives? The people of B.C., the young — that's the legacy, Mr. Premier. It's the young who will pay for this.

The original premise was to be cost-effective, and yet our citizens are in gurneys lined up along hospital hallways and emergency rooms. You want to know what prophetic words mean? Check this out. I quote from the report: "British Columbians will not tolerate an Olympics that will leave taxpayers picking up the tab." That was the social contract when it was being contemplated.

"British Columbians will not tolerate an Olympics that will leave taxpayers picking up the tab." Where are we today? The report cites the 1976 Montreal Olympics only recently paid off. It's 30 years later.

"The legacy is one of a billion-dollar debt to Canadian taxpayers whereby large profits were earned by banks, entrepreneurs, developers, construction companies, advertising agencies, etc." That was a quote within the article of the political economy of the Montreal Olympic Games from the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 1978.

[1525]

It was all laid out there. Why didn't we do our homework? Yet the throne speech stretches the truth by stating: "Every Olympic venue was completed a year ahead of schedule and on budget." Oh my lord.

The Auditor General takes issue with this, of course, and so do the people of B.C. We know what happened at the convention centre — half a billion dollars overrun. There's a misconception — isn't there? The report to the government back in 1995 states: "Public support for the games will be determined by costs to the taxpayer." Picking up the tab — \$8 billion. I don't think that was in the plan.

As the throne speech states, over the next two weeks our government is "hosting dozens of events to engage more than 9,000 top-level business leaders, potential investors and dignitaries from around the world." Potential investors.

During the fall session the Liberal government refused to answer calls to table their plan for using taxpayer-funded dollars for Olympic tickets to host dignitaries and business leaders during the Olympics. Tell that to the thousands who are waiting for surgery because they cancelled surgeries during the Olympics.

Or the cuts to Sport B.C. during the post-Olympic provincial budget. We're going to foresee — these are not prophetic words; I have it on the q.t. — that the government is going to cut Sport B.C., the people that they're trying to promote, after the games. We're going \$29 million to \$26 million, and in 2011 it'll be down to \$11 million. They're going to just completely slash it.

The taxpayers will be subsidizing a party for others while PricewaterhouseCoopers equates the amount of the stimulus generated through our GDP at 0.15 per cent. The Sauder school of economics at UBC confirmed the same position.

VANOC — this is from their report — should be an organization with the "province supplying small initial startup subsidies whereby the government can regain revenues." That was the initiative. That was the plan.

Talking about startup costs. Did the Olympic budget ever get away on us. Ella Fitzgerald said it best. "It isn't where you come from, baby. It's where you're going that counts."

I can't blame the visionaries or the previous governments who initiated a wonderful idea, but I have to question the lack of business acumen by the bunch across from us. The taxpayers of B.C. are going to pay. They are going to pay, and their grandchildren are going to pay.

This is no L.A. or Atlanta games. Why I mention Atlanta is because it built its games around existing infrastructure with no frills. But if the auditors get their hands on this Olympic ledger, we will see another Montreal boondoggle.

Anyway, the report found its way to the government, and as the *Province* reporter Kent Gilchrist wrote way

back on January 4, 1996: "When the blazer brigade is stepping forward to accept the credit for hosting Olympics at the closing ceremonies in a waterfront stadium on the shores of False Creek, few will remember where or by whom the idea was first presented." The blue-blazer brigade has become the B.C. Liberal government's billboard, a political marketing tool that has gone awry.

I've recently become acquainted with the author of the report, and his modesty is such that I don't think he really wants to be named.

Gilchrist goes on: "Long forgotten will be the author who wrote a six-page Olympic bid proposal way back in November of 1995 to get the wheels in motion." That was even before NBC had put together the blockbuster television deal with the Olympics of Atlanta in 1996.

[C. Trevena in the chair.]

What happened to the idea of the non-blazer brigade, the conceptualist? I know Vaughn Palmer referenced today about the \$8 billion and how it started in 1997 and 1996. I have a letter here from the hon. Colin Gabelmann dated February 7, 1996. He announced for the first time, because of what this report said, that the government of the day was going to form a Vancouver Olympic Games study committee report to the Premier.

I guess I'm going to end by saying that you can start off with great ideas, but sometimes they get lost. What's important is that you can have people who disagree with them, but the very people who embrace them and at the end of the day say it was their idea.... You know you've won the day.

[1530]

I guess I'll end it by saying this. Long forgotten will be a B.C. Transit driver — I can't name him, because he's sitting here — who wrote a six-page Olympic bid proposal way back in 1995 to get the wheels in motion.

Hon. B. Stewart: It's an honour to rise in the House today and respond to the 2010 throne speech on the day that the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper has made history by addressing this House for the first time in 139 years.

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor has provided a much-needed vision for British Columbians. Vision is important. Leadership is paramount.

This is a pivotal time in our province's history. We face tremendous challenge. At the same time, we see tremendous opportunities ahead. It is an exciting time for British Columbia as we get ready to host the world. In the past few weeks I've had the great honour of being part of a number of community celebrations as the Olympic torch has made its way on its final leg to Vancouver to the opening of the Olympic Games tomorrow.

I saw the potential in each and every one of the communities that I travelled to in my role as the minister

representing the government during the Olympic Torch Relay: Revelstoke, Lillooet, Terrace, Prince Rupert, Merritt, Lower Nicola Valley, Kelowna, West Kelowna. I have to say that I was inspired at each one of them — meeting the torchbearers, and the many stories that they had to tell. One of them in my own community, Jonathan Neitsch, a 16-year-old torchbearer who is struggling with a second bout of neuroblastoma, which he's battled since four years of age, was in remission and is again battling, adjusted his chemotherapy just so he could be the final torchbearer in West Kelowna.

I don't know if any of us can remember seeing such a tremendous outpouring of optimism and pride. The sight of people coming together to celebrate the spirit of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the values of teamwork, the dedication and the high level of achievement showed me that it is all possible for us to build a province where we dream and that the people of British Columbia are willing to help get us there. I am truly honoured to be able to serve those citizens at this amazing time.

The Olympics will showcase our diversity. They will showcase our spirit of innovation. Just as every Olympic athlete who comes here will take home a piece of history, British Columbians will see the rewards of the hard work that has gone into making the games a reality.

The Olympic legacy will go far beyond the sporting venues. It will surpass the celebration sites. It will be far more than just a memory in the minds of the three billion people who will see the opening ceremonies on television and each and every one of the events. For years and decades to come, the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will be remembered as a time that British Columbia opens its doors to the world: "You gotta be here."

These opportunities create expansion and reinforcement of our tourism industry. That window into the world, those three billion people looking at the opening ceremonies, the games, are going to discover what each and every one in this House reinforces with each comment about the positiveness about these Olympics — the fact that Vancouver is the launching pad to see the rest of the province. It's not Vancouver's games. It's not British Columbia's. It's Canada's games.

Remember Expo 86. Everyone here will remember Expo and its legacy that it left in the minds — the fact that the Science Centre is still down there at the end of 1st Avenue, and the fact that every one of us still remembers taking our kids or visiting there. Look at where we've come since then.

The vision and the leadership of the former Premier, Bill Bennett, in bringing Expo 86 has left a lasting legacy of positiveness to British Columbia. How many British Columbians think about the criticism of opening up the Coquihalla Highway into the interior of the province? How many use it today without any second thoughts

about the fact that it's a gateway into the Interior, to Kamloops, to Merritt, to the Okanagan?

[1535]

You know, something else that I've done in recent weeks was I've had a chance to visit some of our offices right out on the front line where government staff serve the citizens of British Columbia. One of the hottest commodities out there that I unfortunately didn't bring enough of was these mittens. They ended up being something that.... In every torch relay community people wanted to have those mittens. I can tell you, I could have done well and made many friends by bringing along a whole suitcase full.

Kasia Conradsen in Prince Rupert and her staff, Jennifer Wheeler in Prince George and her staff, and Ken Azimullah in Burns Lake and Vanderhoof are some of the people we talked about — the opportunities that are opening up in their towns. These are not towns that.... People are back at work in the mills, and it has not been an easy time. These are people that appreciate the fact that we've made the right decisions, the tough decisions, and the reality is that they're positive about the outlook in their communities.

The government needs to serve their citizens, and there's nothing more important for the government to do than create opportunities. What this throne speech speaks about at the very core is opportunities. Personally, British Columbia has done a lot for me and my family. We need to create opportunities for innovation. Whether it is how we deliver health, education or building a new economy, we need to create opportunities — real and lasting opportunities — for First Nations to be genuine partners in our society. We need most of all to create opportunities for families.

Creating opportunities means getting away from the past. It means taking a fresh look at how we do things. It means asking questions about why we are doing things the same way we always have. It means asking: is there a better way?

There are people who want to keep British Columbia in the past. They don't want changes in how we deliver health care or education. They don't want to see services delivered differently.

As I travelled around the province, I didn't hear British Columbians talking about the past. I heard people talking about the future. British Columbians want a stable government that lives within its means — back to balanced budgets. I want a government that improves and protects vital services for British Columbians. They want a government that lowers the cost on the economy and that invests in jobs, infrastructure and innovation.

You can see this government is taking action, and this throne speech highlights a number of ways that we will move British Columbia forward.

We are honouring our collective history by recognizing the area covered by the Georgia Basin–Puget Sound ecosystem as the Salish Sea, along with our neighbours

to the south. We are restoring the name Haida Gwaii to the Queen Charlotte Islands.

Working with the federal government and other provinces and territories, British Columbia will pursue amendments to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act to help create a unified federal-provincial review process that does away with redundancy, duplication and unnecessary cost, while encouraging investment and building jobs — a one-project, one-process approach which will create a single framework that is timely, diligent and science-based.

A new investment process review will be launched to simplify and expedite approval processes across government. Local governments will be included in this endeavour as government looks at all impediments to reasonable investment, including zoning, licensing and permitting requirements.

A new wood innovation and design centre in Prince George. How logical is that? It's going to amplify British Columbia's expertise and global reputation as a leader in wood construction, engineered wood opportunities, products and design. I think that so often people fail to see the opportunities with a product that they haven't used. It's the same as change. They're not willing to change.

Unfortunately, we've all watched with horror the devastation in Haiti, but the construction methods in some countries lack the opportunity to be safe in an earthquake. That's one of the benefits of wood, and we're going to make certain that the world knows about that, thanks to this wood innovation and design centre.

[1540]

The new film tax credit program will make B.C. more attractive as a world presence in digital media and film, which we already have a growing presence in and which is often forgotten as an economic driver in our economy.

There's also a new \$180 million commitment to an integrated case management information system which will deliver better front-line services and supports to women, children, income assistance recipients and the most vulnerable.

A new family-with-children property tax deferral program will be provided to all British Columbia families with children under the age of 18. Those families will be given the right to defer property taxes under the new property tax deferral program, similar to those that are already available to seniors and those facing financial hardship. That's about affordability, getting families into homes.

Government is going to work with municipalities to dramatically reduce housing costs for young families, to provide increased opportunity for homes that they can afford in existing neighbourhoods.

We also, in this throne speech, are providing new partnerships with the private sector and parents to enable

the establishment of neighbourhood preschools for four- and three-year-olds within communities over the next five years. They will provide families with new voluntary options for public and private preschool across British Columbia, close to where they live.

A new emphasis will be placed on parental involvement in tailoring the education system to each child's individual needs and passions. New forms of schooling will be developed to provide greater choice and diversity centred on students' special interests and talents, and a voluntary full-time kindergarten for five-year-olds will be implemented this September and will be fully funded in each and every school by September 2011.

The University of British Columbia's living laboratory initiative will be expanded and enhanced so that citizens benefit from the new products and the new knowledge that it fosters.

Innovation and health support services, new hospitals and public-private partnerships will be introduced to give patients new choices, to reward performance in health delivery and to protect health care for future generations.

The government will increase access to residencies for Canadians who have received their medical undergraduate training outside of Canada, to create more doctors in British Columbia.

Significant changes will also be introduced to improve timely access to justice, to combat crime, to reduce impaired and dangerous driving and to improve public safety.

These are just a few of the highlights that will guide our province ahead. This throne speech represents leadership, a government that's looking forward, a government that is offering hope and prosperity to all British Columbians.

Madam Speaker, I thank you for this opportunity to stand before the House as a proud British Columbian. I welcome everyone here to cheer our Olympic athletes and everyone who will make those the greatest Olympic Games ever. Thank you, and go, Canada, go!

D. Routley: It gives me great pleasure and honour to be able to stand in the House again and respond to a throne speech. It's particularly fitting, I suppose, that I follow as critic of the member who just spoke — critic of him as a minister. I'm critic of Citizens' Services, his ministry, which deals with so many pertinent issues right now, including the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. I'll have more to say on that issue in a few minutes.

First of all, I'd like, on this eve of the Olympics, to congratulate the many athletes from around the world who find themselves in British Columbia fulfilling their dreams as young people, particularly, of course, our Canadian athletes. It's been said by the Leader of the Opposition that we need to congratulate not only the athletes but also their families for the many hours that they spend and invest in the dreams of their children.

[1545]

Although this is a narrow endeavour in a sense — sports — it is often a metaphor for other endeavours and aspirations that people hold. Parents everywhere invest their hopes and their dreams in their children, whether they happen to be Olympic athletes or simply ordinary children.

My partner, Leanne Finlayson, and I spend a lot of time driving back and forth from hockey rinks. Both her children, aged six and eight, Matthew and Brooklynne, are hockey players, so we spend pretty much every weekend, as many hours as can possibly be spared, taxiing these kids from arena to arena.

Who knows what the future will bring in terms of their achievement? But what's important is they know that the people around them support their aspirations and that they are important to us. We need to thank all the families of all the athletes for the incredible sacrifices and investments they've made over the years in their own children.

It's also important for us to remember, as we consider the value of the Olympics, that we can be great fans of the sports — as I am, a great fan of hockey in the winter and cycling in the summer — and we can be great supporters of the Olympics as a notion without sacrificing our right to be critics of the management of the Olympics.

Especially in this House, where we are public representatives of people who elect us, we need to watch over the prudence of the spending of their tax dollars. We have a duty to be critical of how the Olympics have been organized and what benefits have been promised.

Over the years there have been so many promises. We've heard the Finance Minister stand in this House dozens of times and swear that it would be \$600 million and not a penny more. Those words need to be remembered as we consider the final cost of this great event.

We've also heard the promise of billions of dollars of benefits that have not materialized, unfortunately. We've had the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, which condemned those promises as misleading. So the people of B.C., unfortunately, won't inherit the affordable housing after the Olympics that the member for Delta North spoke of. He spoke of the notion that the Olympics would be a much more simple endeavour that would leave a legacy that would benefit more British Columbians than simply the elite who happen to be able to attend most of the events.

Although we are critical of the organization, of the failure to realize the benefits that have been promised, of the absolute unbelievability factor of the numbers that were quoted before the Olympics, we celebrate with those athletes and those families this opportunity to make real their dreams.

We also need to thank the volunteers, because these are people who are stepping up in order to help with the Olympics at no benefit to themselves. These are the people who will make the Olympics possible in the end,

and they need to receive our thanks, as legislators, as well.

But again, we can be Olympic supporters without giving up our right to be critics and ask the tough questions, as the Leader of the Opposition pointed out.

This is a time unparalleled in terms of economic downturn. The government took great credit for the finances of British Columbia when the global markets supported the demand for our raw materials, but they're shrinking from that same credit for the downfalls in our revenues as the world markets pummel the demand for many of our raw materials.

We see that the government has hidden for months and months behind this market downturn as an excuse for the absolute loss of our manufacturing base in our forest industry when, in fact, we lost the majority of those mills, those manufacturing enterprises and tens of thousands of jobs while there was a housing boom in the United States. That needs not to be forgotten.

[1550]

As families and businesses struggle with this downturn, this throne speech — the thinnest throne speech in my five years' experience in this House, the thinnest and least detailed throne speech in those five years — offers nothing. Yes, you can defer your property taxes if you're a family with children. You can indebt yourself further, maybe afford a house that you wouldn't otherwise be able to afford, but, in the end, it's an accumulation of more debt. That's what the government offered to families.

What they also offered to families and British Columbians were cuts — a promise of cuts. We can be sure that we need to lessen our expectations of government, as the throne speech recommends. Well, I think British Columbians have come to know that their expectations of this government need to be reduced to a bare minimum regardless of the circumstance, and the follow-through on promises has been dismal.

In previous throne speeches lofty words have been used, lofty words like reconciliation and phrases like the great golden goals and children's budget, seniors budget. These were phrases that stood for ideas and encouraged British Columbians to invest hope, but that hope was dashed against rocks of cynicism by an absolute failure to follow through, be it seniors care or education for our children. Generally, this government has failed.

We expect a strong government to protect its citizens from harm and want. This government is a failure. This government has failed to protect the families of British Columbia as we've seen cut after cut to the services that support families in our schools, in our hospitals, in our communities in general. We have seen a government that cut from child care after the federal government removed funding, while every other province kept their funding levels up.

We have seen this government fail the people of British Columbia. Homelessness is skyrocketing, with numbers

skyrocketing through the roof in every community, not only in the Downtown Eastside and the cores of our major cities but in rural communities as well. That is the legacy of the B.C. Liberal government.

Well, the opposition side is setting about a dialogue with the people of British Columbia. We know that the priorities of the people of British Columbia are different than that. The people of British Columbia expect truth, openness and accountability — three elements sadly lacking in the B.C. Liberal record and the current throne speech.

They expect their democracy to mean something. They expect their vote to have value. That value is being liquidated in the continuous privatization of services and sale of the assets in the common wealth of this province.

Madam Speaker, the potential of this place is great. We have a great potential as legislators to guide this province. We have a responsibility as the regulators and overseers of so many elements of our communities. That has been a failure under the B.C. Liberal government.

Promises unfulfilled. I said earlier that I'm the critic for freedom of information and privacy protection in my role as critic of Citizens' Services, the previous speaker being the minister of that wing of government.

Freedom of information. The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act introduced in the early '90s was a rare moment of universal agreement in this House, where both sides joined to pass a bill that in second reading was characterized as an opportunity to create a culture of openness in government. Since then we've seen an absolute reversal of both ends of that bill — freedom of information and the protection of privacy.

We've seen the development of a sophisticated culture of avoidance when it comes to the government's role and responsibility to share the information of government with its people. We've seen an equal effort and contempt at their responsibility to protect the privacy of British Columbians as reflected in the recent scandal of 1,400 missing files.

[1555]

I'd like to read some words from someone else for a moment. They're particularly poignant words that refer to government and people and their right to information. They are: "A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prelude to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance, and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." Those were the words of James Madison, the fourth president of the United States and considered the author of the U.S. constitution.

Let me read the first part again. "A popular government without popular information or the means of acquiring it is but a prelude to a farce or a tragedy, or perhaps both." Those words ring through time to this day as this

government becomes both farce and tragedy, as this government, in their effort to hide behind secrecy and block people's access to information about its affairs, denies people the right to participate in their democracy.

They become a farce as they scramble to deal with the ridiculous mismanagement of our information that would result in 1,400 files of the most vulnerable British Columbians being stolen — a government that found out about that six months before the provincial election, a government that was so dysfunctional that its ministers only found out seven months after the affair was discovered. In fact, they only released the information once the media discovered the theft of the files.

After seven months of knowing that the personal information of 1,400 vulnerable British Columbians had been stolen by someone with a criminal record for identity-related fraud, they finally sent out notification, but they sent the notification to the wrong people, which became another breach of those people's privacy.

Report after report has condemned the ministers involved, and none of them have stood up to take responsibility for this farce. We have seen a government that allowed this same employee — who was hired under a false name, who had a criminal record for identity theft, who was discovered with 1,400 files of British Columbians, the most vulnerable British Columbians.... One month after returning to work his system access was returned. This is farce but also tragedy for the people involved.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner has characterized the risk as extreme — that this information could lead to harm to these people's finances and shame them publicly. This is a tragedy.

Now I'd like to read you a few more words.

"Access to government information helps us...and others hold the government to account, and accountability enhances democracy. When government does its business behind closed doors, people will invariably believe that government has something to hide. Secrecy feeds distrust and dishonesty. Openness builds trust and integrity.

"But FOI is not just a tool of opposition. The fundamental principle must be this: government information belongs to the people, not to government. This means, among other things, that all citizens must have timely, effective and affordable access to the documents which governments make and keep. Governments should facilitate access, not obstruct it.

"Moreover, information rights are meaningless if disclosure timetables are not met because there aren't enough staff to do the job or if fees become an obstacle to access."

Madam Speaker, those words were the words of the B.C. Premier in the late '90s sitting in opposition, and now he leads a government that has become but a farce when it comes to freedom of information and privacy protection. That commitment is long forgotten by this Premier and this government. That commitment is long broken by this government.

[1600]

In the committee reviewing the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act on which I sit, we've heard

about a sophisticated culture of avoidance which has developed within government — permeates government. Every step is taken to avoid conforming or living up to the act.

We heard from a University of Victoria environmental law representative, who told us that political parties, the media and public interest groups appear to be targeted by public bodies. Other public bodies' requests are made on time 94 percent of the time. Most other government institutions, businesses, researchers, individuals and law firms have their requests met approximately 75 percent of the time. Then it drops down to just over 50 percent for political and media and public interest groups.

Imagine a law that's only followed 50 percent of the time. Imagine a law that's followed by the government that is meant to oversee and enforce that law being followed only 50 percent of the time. It's unbelievable, and it's unacceptable in a democracy, a populist democracy.

Back to the words of James Madison. "A popular government without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a prelude to a farce or a tragedy or both." And look where we are.

You know, the Obama government in the United States a few weeks ago announced how they would follow through on a day one promise they made. Day one in office they promised open and accountable governance. Within 60 days every federal institution, federal government body in the United States, must create on-line reading rooms for documents with routine disclosure of every document possible. Within 45 days every one of those institutions must produce at least three significant sets of data to put on those websites. Within 120 days every one of those federal institutions must provide an open governance plan.

That's the entire government of the United States completely restructuring its access to information and opening itself wide to scrutiny in the most democratic way in less time than it takes for most individual information requests by political parties, media and interest groups in this province. That is a terrible shame.

Now let's flip back to the words of the Premier who, in opposition, said: "Moreover, information rights are meaningless if disclosure timetables cannot be met because there aren't enough staff to do the job or if fees become an obstacle to access."

Well, we've seen how they've performed under their timetables — abysmally. When there's political sensitivity to the information that's requested, it's less than 50 percent compliance with their own law. Unbelievable.

When it comes to the issue of fees, well, let's go back to the words of the University of Victoria environmental law representative. The Sierra Legal Defence Fund requested information about a forest development plan. The Ministry of Forests provided a fee estimate of \$4,020 for that. They demanded a deposit of \$2,010.

The matter wasn't pursued because of the fees. Is that not an obstacle to the access of information? How can

we participate in our democracy when the fees to access the information prevent that? This throne speech has done absolutely nothing to assure us that this government is aware that this threat to our democracy and this failure of our democracy to function are happening.

Deputy Speaker: Member, just one moment. Can you take your seat a minute.

Can I ask all other members who are having separate conversations to please keep them a little quieter so that we can hear the member who is speaking.

Member, please continue.

[1605]

D. Routley: The throne speech is a significant element of democracy. It is more than just a fancy event that we all participate in. We get two tickets per member. We can invite people from our constituency, and everybody's happy to see the pomp and ceremony.

Well, it's more than that. It's the symbolic handing of the right to govern ourselves from the monarchy to the people. It is important. It is important to the notion of this parliamentary democracy. And yet these circumstances that this government allows to continue, when it comes to one of the most essential elements of our democracy.... They continue and worsen.

Other obstacles to our democratic right to participate are in the form of fees to access information about this government. The Sierra Defence Fund was given a fee estimate of \$24,600 for non-compliance records under the Waste Management Act. The ministry requested a deposit of \$12,030. After the Sierra Defence Fund disputed the fee, the ministry's fee was re-estimated and shot up to \$172,947.50 — a sevenfold increase.

Now, if that isn't using fees to put up obstacles to our right to participate in democracy, I don't know what is. It is a sad and pathetic outcome. It is both farce and tragedy, back to the words of James Madison.

This throne speech — its narrow, thin gruel offered to us and British Columbians — does nothing to encourage us to have hope for our democracy. You know, people are enduring a time when struggle is probably the definitive word in their lives, in their businesses, and this government has lost sight. The throne speech offered nothing to the small businesses of this province which struggle, except of course, the HST.

The HST is a job-killing tax which will hurt our tourism industry, which will hurt our restaurants, which will hurt small business. It puts the words of the government, when it comes to its green commitment, to the test. And they fail.

There used to be exemptions from the provincial sales tax for energy-efficient appliances, for bicycles. There used to be no tax on many of the building supplies and building services to renovate homes and make them more energy efficient, but all that's gone. Why? Because

this government.... They say it's the best thing that they could offer to the economy.

Well, where was it? Where was it on their agenda before the election? Where was it in the throne speech they offered before the election? Was it just an epiphany that the Finance Minister had at the water cooler in Ottawa? Was it just a realization that struck him suddenly? He said in this House that he was unaware that the Ontario government had implemented an HST. That is either an admission of incompetence or misleading.

This province has hope. The people of this province are ready to roll up their sleeves and address the challenges that we all face. The people of British Columbia are incredibly resourceful. Our communities are strong. We are ready for the challenge to restore this province, but that will not be realized as long as there's an absence of leadership and integrity in government.

When government fails to live up to its most basic promises, when government is so weak that it can't protect the children and families of this province from want, then those aspirations and priorities of British Columbians will continue to go wanting.

The people of British Columbia have seen so many broken promises. There are too many to list. I mean, from B.C. Rail to HST to not increasing gambling and then we saw it go up from a \$99-per-week limit on on-line gambling to \$9,999 per week, I believe. That's not increasing gambling? And somehow that was good for people?

[1610]

The HEU promise — I mean, it's so tired. We've gone through it so many times. Can we just offer something to the people of British Columbia that could be seen as an achievement that maybe even this side of the House would support — some kind of follow-through?

The words of reconciliation, yet the people on our First Nations still struggle with the most abominable living conditions. We have heard these notions and these promises that have gone unfulfilled.

The promises around reconciliation are made by the Premier. The minister responsible answers the questions. Then when we ask the other ministers in budget estimates — which, for those people at home, is the process where we get to ask each minister line-by-line detail about their budget and their projections and their ministry functions: "Well, how have you adjusted your ministry to the notions and requirements of reconciliation and the new relationship...?" "Well," they say, "that's not our ministry. That's the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation."

It's business as usual. The new relationship ends up being just as abusive as the old relationship. The people in our First Nations communities are hopeful partners and waiting on the shores of this province, on this Island and others, for a partner that they have never met — a partner that they expected would come in goodwill and live up to those words.

This side of the House started the B.C. treaty process. We will continue to work with our First Nations brothers and sisters to reach full equality of opportunity in this province.

It's not good enough just to rest on words. We need action. Chief Lisa Shaver stood out on the steps of this building today and pleaded, hoping that the Prime Minister, who was here today, and the Premier would hear about the 3,000 missing women in this country, many of them from British Columbia. She represents a First Nation on a tiny island in my constituency. Most hours of the day they don't even have clean running water. But still they're hopeful, they act in good faith, and they're ready to be partners.

Unfortunately, there's no oil and gas under their island. There's no room for a container terminal. There's no reason for this government to pay them notice.

The Nanaimo Snuneymuxw band struggles, inner city, with housing issues. No answers to their problems. The Halalt people of the Chemainus-Crofton area have opposed the drilling of wells into the Chemainus aquifer. Almost no Crown land on Vancouver Island is available for treaty settlement. They have opposed those wells, and still the wells went ahead, with the processes all completed, environmental assessment. But the one problem? No real consultation with the Halalt.

This throne speech, to make a difference to British Columbians, needs to be followed through on — as thin as it is.

Hon. I. Chong: I am pleased to rise and respond to the Speech from the Throne yet again, as I have each year, because the Speech from the Throne does provide an opportunity for the public to understand the vision that is being put forward and also builds upon previous throne speeches and the framework that was laid out before.

I am pleased to say that the series of throne speeches that our government has brought in since 2001 has not only provided focus on a number of areas but has also provided goals and objectives for us to accomplish.

[1615]

I can assure the members of the public and those who are watching and listening that while some of these ideas and some of these goals and objectives take longer than a year, it provides us the opportunity to ensure that at the end of that time we, in fact, have accomplished that.

We started off in 2001 talking about the importance of our economy, making sure that what we inherited, which was the worst in Canada, would become the best in Canada. We did achieve that.

We wanted to ensure that we were a province that welcomed the world in terms of creating jobs, in terms of providing opportunities for our communities. We have done that, Madam Speaker.

We wanted to bring in a competitive tax regime to allow people to want to come to British Columbia to work

here so that they kept more dollars in their pockets. We wanted to do that, and we've accomplished that.

We said that we would always bring forward budgets that protected health care and education, and each and every year our budgets have shown a steady rise, a steady increase in our health and education budgets.

But something happened about a year ago that has caused not just our jurisdiction but jurisdictions around the world to take a look at things differently. The global economic slowdown, the recession, did not shield British Columbia from what we were doing here. It affected us, and it affected us in a very dramatic and significant way.

What we needed to do was to take a look at these goals and objectives that we had, to be able to reshape them, move them forward and ensure that in this new 21st century — in this new century of technology and new advancements in medicine, new ways of learning, new ways of educating — we take advantage of that downturn and move things forward in a way that our citizens can truly benefit from. That doesn't happen without vision. That doesn't happen without keeping focus on what we want to achieve.

The focus still will be to have a strong economy, because at the end of the day, it's a strong economy that will create those jobs and wealth in our communities. It will allow our young people to stay in our jurisdictions, to stay in our communities. It will allow for investments to again provide the stable base that we need in our communities. And it will allow us to have the financial resources to provide for those things that I hear each and every day from members in this chamber, especially from the members opposite — to provide for those financial resources we need to protect health care and to protect education.

I wanted to ensure that we not lose sight of the importance of the fact that we have a throne speech and not lose sight of the fact that we still live, in my view, in one of the best places on earth but that we still have much work ahead of us. We can accomplish those goals that we have if we work together.

I am somewhat disconcerted at times to hear members opposite pose negative comments, because they, too, know that the economic downturn was not made in one particular jurisdiction or one particular country. It has affected each and every one of us, and we are going to have to take a look at the world in a very different way.

We're going to have to take a look at those challenges that we were presented with, and we're going to have to reshape how we conduct government in the future. I think our citizens understand that, because they have seen this happen in other places.

But what is available to us here in British Columbia is an opportunity that we have that no other jurisdiction has, particularly in this year, and I'm glad to hear members opposite speak of this, as well as members on this side of the House. We do have, in about 27 hours from now, the

official start of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

As has been said, just about every independent economist will say that that is still the very best economic stimulus, the shot in the arm that is needed to turn an economy around. We have it here in British Columbia, we have it here in Canada, and nowhere else is that going to be taking place — at least not for a number of years in those other jurisdictions that have won the bid for their winter games.

We have this opportunity that we cannot afford to waste. Within a short period of time, by April, if we look back and realize we have not taken and seized that opportunity, we will not have a chance to go back and revisit it.

[1620]

So I do hope that all members of this House will take a look at this opportunity and do what they can to welcome these athletes, to welcome these visitors, to welcome these investors when they show up on the streets of our communities.

I was recently in Vancouver, and I was quite amazed, as I was walking down the streets — admittedly, very few cars, because they have had to start implementing some of their traffic control — by the number of people walking on the streets smiling as you walk by.

That, to me, was a good sign, because those who are volunteering to help out are already excited, already energized, already enthused by the fact that they're going to see as many as 250,000 or 300,000 visitors descend upon their towns, their communities. They want to say: "Welcome, we're glad you're here. Really, you gotta be here." That's what they're saying, and that's what we're ensuring they're able to do.

I will speak a little more on the Olympics in a short while, but I want to also take this opportunity to talk about some of the things that I have responsibility for in this Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport — in particular, to assure the members opposite that I still am very focused on the objectives that this ministry has in terms of protection of the population and public health and the other roles we have.

One of our overarching goals in this ministry is to help British Columbians live with the very best possible health outcomes. To achieve that, we need to work on promoting healthy living. That includes physical activity. That includes healthy eating. That includes living tobacco-free.

We also need to ensure that we put measures in place that protect our health. That means setting the standards for ambient air and drinking water quality. It means ensuring that we have safe food.

We also need to prevent the incidence of disease, chronic diseases and illnesses. We have to prevent falls and injuries. So we have to take a look at our immunization programs, and we have to take a look at things like fetal alcohol spectrum disorder as well.

I was pleased that our ministry had the lead role this past fall to deal with the H1N1 pandemic. I was pleased because I knew here in British Columbia we had the best people working on that particular immunization program, the largest immunization program ever undertaken in this province — in fact, the largest ever undertaken in this country, because it was a pandemic.

Pandemic, some people thought, meant the severity of a flu, of a virus. In fact, a pandemic didn't refer to that at all. It referred to it as being global. It had spread to so many countries. Of course, Canada and British Columbia are not immune to that.

We had a strategy. We had a coordinated effort that our provincial medical health officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, led in coordinating with our other medical health officers in our health authorities, providing the information to put forward a plan that in particular, as well, worked with our aboriginal communities, where the incidence and spread of that virus could have been much greater and much more devastating.

At the end of the day, while we did have some deaths in this province — I believe it was around 55 — it was far less than what could have occurred had we not had a plan, had we not put in place a strategy that allowed for an approach for those who were most susceptible to receive the vaccine, the immunization shots, at the very earliest possible date.

I acknowledge, too, that there were some problems that we encountered, because when you're dealing with so many people that are impacted by this, there will be some human errors that are made, there will be some misunderstandings. But as soon as those occurred, the people in our ministry and the Ministry of Health Services were very quick to correct any misunderstanding to ensure that those who were most in need of the vaccines, in fact, did receive them.

[1625]

I am pleased to say that 40 percent of British Columbians have been immunized. It's not a large amount when you consider that, I believe, one of the Atlantic provinces is close to 70 percent. But it seems that here in British Columbia our population seems to have an aversion to some immunizations, but I do hope that many will change their minds, because if we were to experience another wave, I again want to assure them that the vaccines are still available and that people should, in fact, avail themselves of them.

We know that we need to, as I say, protect the health of our citizens. We know that we need to respond to them in a very quick way. That's what this ministry does, and that's what the staff in this ministry does. They do a very good job.

If they're listening, I just want to say thank you to them once again because I am deeply gratified and appreciative of the work that they do day in and day out. There were people that came in from retirement who

worked around the clock, taking time away from their families just to ensure that the public were protected and their families were protected.

We know, going forward, that we need to do the work of health promotion and disease prevention in a more innovative way, which is one of the reasons why we continue to work with our various partners in the community. We continue to work with the B.C. Lung Association on our QuitNow program, which is encouraging people to stop smoking. In fact, we have in British Columbia one of the lowest smoking rates in all of Canada. That's something to be proud of because I could say that wasn't always the case.

We're going to, as well, take a look at how we're going to strengthen the public health care system in cooperation with the Ministry of Health Services. There is much work that we do in collaboration because we know that in order to keep people out of the public health care system due to illness, we have to start by ensuring that they have a wellness program.

We like to believe that we're the ministry of wellness for healthy living. We know that that does not just entail the physical being but also the mental health and well-being of individuals. We are continuing to work with our partners in the community as well as the health authorities to move forward on that.

We also have to actively and passionately support all British Columbians who want to be their own very best health care managers so that they understand the link between their lifestyle and their health. We have to make it easy for them so that when they want to make these healthy choices, they're easy choices to make.

In so doing, we need to be able to provide them with as much information as possible so that they have informed choices about the foods that they eat. For that reason, our government introduced, then put in place and implemented the restriction on industrially produced trans fats. That's for all those food establishments that require a permit to provide foods.

I'm happy to say that the public, in particular, was very receptive to this. People would like to know that if there are ways to reduce the additional amounts of fats in their food, there is an opportunity for that to take place. By restricting the industrially produced trans fat in our restaurants, in our food establishments, it means people have that assurance that there are going to be those choices.

I know over the next number of months we're going to be looking at another number of areas, a number of initiatives, not the least of which is the amount of sodium that we consume here in this province, the sodium intake that we all need to pay some attention to.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation, B.C. and Yukon chapter, has indicated that high blood pressure, hypertension — you know, cardiac problems — are a result of too much sodium. So we need to take a very proactive

approach to this. I can say to members of this House that when this government does move forward on this, I hope that we will have the support of all members of this chamber that this is the right thing to do. Also, it provides an opportunity for an easy choice for British Columbians regarding their lifestyle.

Physical activity continues to be an area that we need to promote, and whether it is in an organized sports area or not, we need to, again, find opportunities for people to take advantage of physical activity. It doesn't mean just the very young. It means persons of all ages.

[1630]

One of the reasons why I say that is because the implementation of our seniors parks around the province has been a success story. So 18 communities took up the challenge of providing the space that's necessary and then the maintenance of the equipment that we provided so that they could have these very specialized pieces of equipment for seniors to be able to use in an outside park.

They don't need to belong to a club. They don't need to have to go to a rec centre where they are concerned about the hours of operation. These are pieces of equipment that are installed outdoors, readily accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, if that's someone's choice. It provides an opportunity, particularly, for our seniors to strengthen their physical agility and ability to do rehabilitation if that is what they're desirous of.

Again, I'm very pleased that that was another program, another area where we made it easier for people when they wanted to make those choices about increasing physical activity.

One of our great goals that were introduced in 2005 was goal No. 2: "To lead the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness." I believe that we are already making much progress in that area.

British Columbia has received international recognition for the leadership we have shown in promoting healthy living. Most recently the World Health Organization acknowledged that British Columbia is among leaders worldwide in healthy living in *The Case of ActNow B.C.* That is a report by the World Health Organization, and it says that government's commitment to supporting its provincial healthy-living initiative is key to its success.

Through ActNow B.C. that is exactly what we are doing — promoting healthy-living initiatives not only in schools and in local governments but also throughout our communities. That has resulted in British Columbia leading the way in Canada with the lowest self-reported obesity rates, the highest youth and adult physical activity rates, among the highest rate of consumers of fruits and vegetables and, as I've already indicated, the lowest rate of tobacco use.

Is there more to do? There will always be more to do — absolutely — but we have already laid the groundwork

for these initiatives to be successful. We will only succeed if everyone is participating in this and if everyone does their part to look at their health outcome and their lifestyles.

Hon. Speaker, like other jurisdictions around the world, we are facing an ever-increasing aging population with, obviously, the accompanying increased demands on the health care system. We need to act now to make positive changes in our attitude and our approach to being healthy.

I've indicated the healthy food choices. I've indicated physical activity. But there will always be more that can be done, and we will continue working with the various non-profit charitable organizations to allow us to move forward on that. We're always receptive to their ideas to ensure that the goal of healthy living stays very much at the forefront.

I want to speak, again, back towards the Olympics because this is where the idea of the sports in this ministry also takes shape. With the opening of the Olympics, as I say, in just over 24 hours from now in terms of the opening ceremonies, it has never been a better time for British Columbia to be a significant role model not just for other provinces and territories but, indeed, for the world, and just to encourage all of our communities and our regions to pursue this healthy lifestyle.

[L. Reid in the chair.]

As we move forward towards the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, the host city, which is Vancouver — primarily Vancouver and Whistler and, of course, Richmond — and our host province and our host country, we're going to be able to share with all of our visitors some of the outcomes we've achieved to date, what we hope to accomplish. They will also see that we have put into practice certain things that we believe in, such as designating and ensuring that smoking is in fact restricted in a number of areas.

They're going to know about our restriction of industrially produced trans fat. They're going to see an opportunity to eat healthy fruits and vegetables and have healthy choices, because we live in a very multicultural province, and as we have our visitors go to the various different communities and try out the various different ethnic foods, again, they will see those healthy choices continue to be made available to them.

[1635]

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are providing a tremendous legacy for our province. The housing opportunities, which I think that the Minister of Housing and Social Development spoke of when he provided his comments, are already very evident.

I've seen in the news cycle in particular that people in the Squamish and Whistler corridor are very excited about what is going to be left behind. For some it will be

their first opportunity to move into a home with a yard. They can actually have more space than what would otherwise be afforded them, because they live in those communities that have in the past not been an affordable area. So there will be a legacy of housing that is left behind.

There will also be housing that will be available after the athletes leave the Olympic village. I know that some members opposite would say that that may not be enough, but it is still more than what would have been there had the Olympic Games not arrived here in British Columbia.

The sports infrastructure in particular is going to provide opportunities, not just for physical activity. It really is going to be an opportunity for this province to use that infrastructure for economic returns. Recently I was at B.C. Showcase, which is in the Robson Square area, with my colleague the Minister of Tourism to talk about sport tourism. It's not just about the idea of hosting sporting events, but it is also about the tourism impacts, the economic benefits that will result.

A sporting event, whether it is a single-sport event or a multisport event, provides for athletes and their support staff and their coaches and the officials and their family members to descend upon an area to train; to compete; to spend dollars in the hotels, in the restaurants or in the grocery store; to fuel up their vehicles if that's what they need; to ride public transit — to spend dollars in our communities. I know that there are economic benefits with hosting sport events, which is one of the reasons why community after community put their bids forward.

Just last year, 2009, the Scotties Tournament was here in Victoria. They just did an economic statement, and I believe that some \$12 million was what was generated in this area. As a result, they left behind a donation to one of our charities here. That is what sports can do, not just for the competition, not just for the economic benefit but to leave behind, as well, a charity of choice — some dollars for that organization.

That's one of the reasons why we need to make sure that we continue to have our necessary investments in our infrastructure, to make British Columbia a viable place to host events — sport event hosting and international podium performances.

I can say that the infrastructure that we have built over the past number of years is not just located in the Lower Mainland. It has been around the province. I've recently been able to travel to Kelowna, to Kamloops and to Prince George. I've seen the sports facilities in those communities, and I've seen the excitement of the sporting organizations and even the municipal governments who are working in collaboration with the sports organizations. They are just thrilled that these investments are going to provide tremendous opportunities to have sporting events take place.

We have, since 2005, invested hundreds of millions of dollars in sport infrastructure. Contrary to what members opposite would have people believe, the hundreds of millions of dollars of infrastructure are going to be a lasting benefit, a lasting legacy that this province is going to enjoy for many, many more years. We've invested hundreds of millions of dollars to support not just the infrastructure but, as well, our community clubs, our teams.

We've been able to lever those dollars from the federal government's side, to also bring in hundreds of millions of dollars from them. That is important, and it means that it will continue to provide British Columbia with the opportunity to move forward.

[1640]

Last week I was in Prince Rupert, where I was at the opening ceremonies of the Northern B.C. Winter Games. The MLA representing the area was also there, the member for North Coast. I know he was as excited as the young athletes and the community that was there. A huge volunteer base was evident. The capacity for them to host the event was evident. The excitement was there.

The Northern B.C. Winter Games are part of our suite of games that we have through the B.C. Games Society. We have our Summer Games. We have our Winter Games, our Northern B.C. Games, our Disability Games and our Seniors Games.

I know that a number of communities throughout this area, throughout the province, have played host to them — some more than once, I should say. It's because of the understanding of the sport system and what they offer to our athletes. It's a vital training ground for our young athletes who want to move on to a national and international competition — such as, we all know, our gold-medal winner from Beijing, Carol Huynh from Hazelton, who has really inspired young athletes in the area of wrestling.

We also know that we have athletes at other levels. Even our Seniors Games continue to provide the athletes there an opportunity to compete and to develop more strength in what they do. We should never underestimate that.

Some of our Olympic athletes actually started at B.C. Games, and I believe that there are as many as 11 of them who are now competing in the 2010 games. I know that those 11 athletes coming from our hometowns.... We'll be cheering them on.

Again, I'm just very grateful for the work done through the B.C. Games Society, their board and all their staff, because they are providing this great opportunity for athletes to test their skills, for them to grow and develop and really gain valuable competition experience.

Entire communities do benefit from the many lasting economic and social legacies and sport legacies that games leave behind. That will be true, as well, from the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

We've also developed a unique regionally based athlete development system led by Canadian Sport Centre Pacific. I just wanted to briefly touch on that, because the success of that system is evident in British Columbia's results at the international level, where seven of the 18 Olympic medals in Beijing came from athletes training in British Columbia. That, too, is important.

As we move towards a very exciting time in our province, as we get ready to cheer on our athletes, I hope that all the communities around the province, too, will find a way to celebrate. Certainly, I know in my community of Oak Bay, at the Oak Bay Recreation Centre, they're planning a huge celebration and watching the opening ceremonies.

I understand that here in Victoria they are doing the same. I've no doubt we'll hear of other communities having huge celebrations occurring in their communities because they want to watch all the young performers at the opening ceremonies. They want to be ready to be able to cheer on our athletes as they go on to win medals.

Wherever you are, however you're going to be cheering on those athletes, at the end of the day, we know that we just want each and every one of them to have a safe competition. We want them to return to their communities in a safe way. But we also want them to win gold. So to all those athletes: go, Canada, go!

G. Coons: It's an honour to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne. I want to begin by acknowledging that tomorrow will be one of the biggest events in B.C. history, the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, or those cool sporting events that take place in B.C. between 2009 and 2011. I want to offer my best to all of the international athletes, the media and the guest spectators, and give some advice to those visiting athletes that they better keep close to the red and white because they aren't going to be getting any closer.

I want to acknowledge all the help, the support, the enthusiasm, the energy and the support of all the volunteers that are participating. Throughout the chamber we've heard the excitement and the thrill of the relay torch going through communities.

[1645]

It was in Prince Rupert on February 1, with three local torchbearers: Bob Thompson, a respected city employee that was just retiring; a good friend of mine, Justin Barton, who is a dancer with Gitmaxmak'ay Nisga'a Dancers; and a longtime volunteer, Charlotte Rowse, who lit the flame. It was quite an exciting event.

Again, it comes down to.... When I hear people in this room talk about the torch and the torch relay and the excitement in people's communities, I understand that. I want to jump on the bandwagon. But it's pretty awkward when you aren't even invited to the big show. In my riding VANOC indicated that no invitation was given to

the local federal representative or the local provincial representative. VANOC basically said: "We kindly asked our government partners to assist us with the selection of one federal and one provincial representative to speak on stage at each celebration."

I was pleased to see Richard Neufeld, the ex-MLA from here and an ex-cabinet minister, and the member for Westside-Kelowna there on the stage representing the province in my riding of Prince Rupert.

I'm sure that many of us on this side of the House would have loved the opportunity to participate, along with other members in the House, with the torch relay. But again, a supposedly apolitical event in some situations wasn't.

On that, if we look back at the throne speech, it's very disappointing — a lot of lip service, a rehashing of old ideas, nothing tangible for British Columbians who really needed direction, really needed opportunities as far as economic and social disparities throughout the province.

One section of the throne speech that caught my attention was: "This session will feature additional measures to restore our economy and to create jobs in every sector."

Many members on the other side have gone through the riding of North Coast. I just want to give a few statistics about Prince Rupert and the regional district. The regional district that I represent had the highest percentage, 32.5 percent, of lone-parent families in the province with children at home when last measured.

Our regional district was the worst region in the province for percentage of population ages 19 to 64 who are employable receiving income assistance — five times higher than the provincial average. The regional district has 2½ times as many EI beneficiaries per capita as the provincial average.

The regional district's rate of spousal abuse is 5.6 percent — two times the provincial rate. Teen pregnancy, 2.5 times higher than the provincial rate. One of the regional districts that I represent, besides the Central Coast regional district, has the worst region in the province for the percentage of children receiving income assistance for more than a year, as far as 2006.

The child abuse rate is 30.5 percent, which is 3½ times higher than the provincial rate of 8.7 percent. Three out of every ten children in that regional district are victims of reported abuse.

When we look at statistics and we look at the needs and at what needs to happen throughout the province, this was a very disappointing throne speech. We're looking forward to the budget. Hopefully, when we look at the inequities and the concerns and disparities throughout the province, that will be alleviated when the budget comes down.

[1650]

You know, recently the NDI, the Northern Development Initiative Trust, did a presentation for the rural

caucus of the opposition and for, I believe, the northern caucus of the government. One of the key facts that they put out.... They looked at the region, the north coast region. The north coast region represents from Haida Gwaii right out to Nechako. So it's not a real sense of the reality that's happening in the northwest and, specifically, my riding of North Coast.

They looked at and reiterated that the population decline on the north coast, and that's out to Nechako.... For ten years in a row there's a population decline.

Building permits. The largest decline of any development region in B.C. No major project construction has existed in the last seven or eight years.

The unemployment rate in 2008 was the highest in B.C. at 7.7 percent, versus the provincial rate of 4.4 percent, and in October 2009 it was up to 10 percent. In the northwest region, increases in unemployment, in jobs, from 2008-2009 is in the 50 percent range.

The NDI had some specific recommendations that, as I mentioned before, we hope to see in the forthcoming budget. But when we look at the throne speech that we just had, there is no mention of rural B.C. There's no mention of the Asia-Pacific gateway authority that the government announced last August it was pursuing with the federal government. The stated purpose of the authority was to redouble its efforts to open up the critical northern corridor. I guess that the government can attest to, "Yes, we have redoubled it," because, you know, when you redouble nothing, you still get nothing.

What the NDI, the Northern Development Initiative Trust, presented to northern MLAs for both government and opposition.... They were echoing that the northwest is suffering the worst economic decline of any region in B.C., although it is a wealth of underdeveloped forest, mineral and coastal resources.

They put forward quite a few suggestions for the MLAs to look at and consider and hopefully put forward with their caucuses. I picked out five key initiatives that were presented by the NDI for the north coast. They were looking at regional investment attraction, that across the northwest we need to attract value-added manufacturing to the region, with focus on sectors that will diversify the economy, whether it's forestry, bioenergy, mining.

A key one that's left off and left out of the throne speech is fisheries — not even mentioned. Again, when we look at the investment that we need in this province, we have to, and as a province we must, consider the value and the importance of fisheries.

In Prince Rupert there's the Sustainable Marine Fisheries and Communities Alliance that has been going on for the last four or five months. It's a collection of about 15 First Nations governments, their fishery committees, hereditary chiefs, chief councillors, mayors and councillors from the regional districts and other municipalities, and two representatives from North Coast-Skeena First Nations Stewardship Society, the Northern Native

Fishing Corporation, the Native Brotherhood and the UFAWU putting together a vision and some initiatives to bring the communities together on this central and north coast to ensure a sustainable marine commercial fishery. This is what we need to do.

This government, again, time after time after time, ignores the importance of the fisheries in this province. The alliance is going to put some of the responsibilities for the fisheries on to the First Nations and the commercial fishermen, and work with fishermen inland and the sports fisheries.

[1655]

The direction laid out by the alliance, and the vision they have, is this sustainable integrated fishery. But nothing about the fisheries. When we look at the last couple years with the Sustainable Aquaculture Committee, some of the recommendations, closed containment.... This is a prime opportunity to look at regional investment attraction into closed-containment systems. Aquaculture is here. It's here to stay. It has to be done in a different manner, and closed containment is the only way to go.

The alliance is also looking at community hatcheries, based on the ocean ranching in Alaska, which brings in billions of dollars — a co-op model that will benefit the fishermen, benefit communities and work towards a sustainable fishery.

Some of the other initiatives brought forward by the mayors that presented this.... The reason that I'm bringing this up is that there were four mayors there — the mayor of Prince Rupert and the mayor of Terrace, the mayor of Kitimat and the mayor of Port Clements — who presented their initiatives and concerns about what's going on in the northwest.

The Haida Gwaii community forest. We know that through the land use plan there's got to be some allotment for the people that need the wood resources on Haida Gwaii. There has to be strategic land use agreement implementation, and there needs to be some finances to make resources and funding available over the two years to support revitalization and development of the forest sector in Haida Gwaii.

The mayors talked about the Prince Rupert Tsimshian access project, the phase 1 of connecting Prince Rupert to Metlakatla with a connecting road to Port Simpson, and the importance of that. That connection would be critical infrastructure for the area.

Back to green energy initiatives, and a push for the north to develop those. Again, in the northwest is what we're talking about.

We look at the throne speech, and there is no mention of the Premier's EI reform plans that he had been peddling around with the Premiers on behalf of the Harper government. I find it interesting that we did have the Prime Minister here today.

In Prince Rupert I attended a rally about proroguing the government, and I spoke at that about the concerns

of what was left on the table. One of the concerns, and one of the issues left on the table, was the EI reform that is so desperately needed. I'm sure that the Prime Minister and the Premier, when they're out and about, will hear the concerns from British Columbia about the HST. You know, 90 percent of British Columbians disagree with the implementation of this regressive tax.

Now, what isn't in this throne speech? Not a word about open government. Nothing about transparency, despite the vow of the Premier to be the most open and transparent government there ever was. What have we seen over the years? Well, the B.C. Rail scandal, the Olympic secrecy, B.C. Ferries lack of accountability and the comptroller general's scathing report about that. FOI requests — well, you can request, but it's going to cost you thousands of dollars.

No mention of the Premier's literacy initiatives or even the word "literacy." Nothing about homelessness or his own task force on homelessness.

No mention about accountability or transparency, except for B.C. Ferries. In the throne speech it said: "New accountability and transparency will be brought to B.C. Ferries as it continues improving services with new ferries, terminals and amenities." Well, you know, it's a follow-up. I'm sure the minister is working on that as we speak. The comptroller general found that the corporation has lost accountability, that costs have increased and that executive pay has skyrocketed.

[1700]

To recap some of the findings in the comptroller general's report, you have this B.C. Ferries hierarchy with an overpaid CEO, a bloated remunerated board, and lots of generous bonuses that are easily earned. You have the B.C. Ferry Authority, with one shareholder acting on behalf of British Columbians, whose boards only seem to have one role, and that's where they vote themselves outrageous raises.

The ferries commissioner does a good job for what he's legislated to do. He looks after the financial security at B.C. Ferries but ignores the public interest. That was pointed out in the comptroller general's report.

You have the Coastal Ferry Act, which along with the commissioner has been structured with no mandate to protect the public interest nor the people who depend on the ferry system.

There's insufficient transparency in accounting. There are unverified figures supplied to B.C. Ferries, says the comptroller general. Then there's the outlandish alternate service provider component of the Coastal Ferry Act, where B.C. Ferries is supposed to go out and find alternate service providers. It's costing millions of dollars, and that's got to come out of the legislation.

There's nothing in there to protect the public service mandate of the ferry system.

Freedom of information has been a concern for many in British Columbia. We've called on it for five years:

give B.C. Ferries proper accounting. Hopefully that will be some of the legislation coming through.

But the most glaring remark about the setup of the Coastal Ferry Act and the Ferry Commission is that it doesn't take into account B.C. Ferries' function as a public service. The only reason it seems to exist is to make money.

Again, that brings me into a real concern that's happening in Prince Rupert right now. B.C. Ferries is trying to implement route 10A, which is a Tsawwassen–Prince Rupert trip. So it will be Tsawwassen, Port Hardy, Prince Rupert, every second week, meaning 20 fewer sailings in and out of Prince Rupert during the summer — a huge impact on tourism from Haida Gwaii all the way out to Prince George and the city of Prince Rupert. The tourism associations are concerned.

My biggest concern is that B.C. Ferries wants to do the crewing out of Tsawwassen, which will mean a loss of about 140 jobs in Prince Rupert. We can't afford to lose one job, as most people in this House realize.

Agriculture. There's nothing about agriculture in there. You know, the minister talks about the need for a Buy B.C. He says, "Oh, we're doing it" — but no. We need a true Buy B.C. campaign going, as we had years ago.

Now, as far as children and families, the quote that basically flew out at me was "strengthening families is at the centre of our social and economic agenda." Well, if we look at the social agenda of this government, it's been attacking the most vulnerable in the province — the highest poverty rate in Canada for the sixth year in a row, homelessness at one of the highest levels we've ever seen, seniors that are barely making it day to day.

There's no mention of a poverty reduction plan. We see what's happening under this Premier — six years, number one in child poverty. I can't even comprehend how this government can suggest that strengthening families is at the centre of their agenda.

If we look at this Premier's legacy, his legacy is number one for world-class poverty. We are one of the wealthiest countries in the world. The province, our province, is one of the most prosperous regions, but many people are left behind. It's just not one neighbourhood in British Columbia. It's the whole province.

One in five B.C. children live in poverty. There are over 10,000 homeless people in communities all around our province, even in small communities. More than 2,000 of them live in greater Vancouver, and Pivot Legal Society says it's going to likely triple by the year 2010.

[1705]

Poverty isn't new. But this government, under this Premier's priorities, has made it worse for the most vulnerable in our province. Until 2001 poverty in this province was dropping faster and farther than the national rate. But what changed? Well, what changed was that the B.C. Liberals got in power.

Between 2002 and 2005 this Premier cut spending on social programs by nearly one-third, and that included annual funding for new social housing. He made social assistance harder to get. It forced people to jump through a maze of bureaucratic hoops, forced people who could no longer pay rent or buy food to wait three weeks before even letting them apply again. The number of people on welfare kept getting higher, and the number of homeless people doubled.

The average income for poor families in British Columbia is over \$11,000 below the poverty line. The B.C. poverty rate for aboriginal children is more than 40 percent. The B.C. poverty rate for children in single-parent families is 50 percent. The average annual income for the richest 1/10 of 1 percent in B.C. is almost \$2.5 million. These are statistics that we shouldn't be proud of.

What do we have here? We have a gold medal for poverty hanging around the Premier's neck — the highest child poverty in Canada for six years in a row.

We look at tourism, culture and the arts. What's missing? Well, there's no mention about how the government will help the tourism industry survive the horrendous blow from the HST, no mention of how the government will address funding for tourism destination marketing organizations, no mention of reinstating the funding that was cut from arts and culture, and no mention of a serious plan to avoid the 7 percent drop in tourism that has been forecast by Central 1 Credit Union.

What was noticeable in the throne speech were the platitudes around education: "New forms of schooling will be developed to provide greater choice and diversity" and "parental involvement." There's nothing in this throne speech that indicates that this government understands the true implications of the downloading and lack of funding for schools throughout the province and the crisis that they're in.

Parents, students and teachers wanted to hear a commitment from the government with a substantial vision about how resources would be invested in the education system. Instead, it came out as vague schemes, lofty language and ignoring what's happening in school districts throughout the province.

Recently the B.C. Association of School Business Officials, which are the secretary-treasurers, said that the K-to-12 system needs an extra \$300 million to maintain current levels and that if it doesn't get an immediate injection of new funding, it's going to mean cuts to children with special needs, layoffs of teachers, layoffs of support staff. Here the government can find half a billion dollars for a new roof on B.C. Place, but they refuse to protect public education from devastating and severe cuts.

The cost pressures, the downloading onto school districts — we're seeing it throughout the province, in Kamloops, Prince George, Victoria — negotiated salary increases, negotiated pension adjustments, administrative salary increases, administrative pensions, support

staff increases, carbon offsets, gas tax, smart-tool software, MSP increases, hydro rate increases, BCeSIS costs, DPAC and PAC cuts, B.C. School Sports cuts, full-day kindergarten, building maintenance costs, TOC criteria for wages as far as the Ready award, StrongStart costs.

Then there are the other revenue pressures: the annual facilities grant, the funding protection, the one-time reserves that they're holding, growth in special ed and general inflation for supplies. There are dozens of cost pressures that are being downloaded onto school districts throughout the province.

[1710]

I think the most amazing thing that came out of the throne speech was the phrase: "Nothing is more important...than the harmonized sales tax." This government just doesn't get it — 90 percent of British Columbians realize that we have to go in a different direction. This is not the time to implement a regressive downloading of \$1.9 billion onto them.

In the Haida Gwaii *Observer*, they did an editorial where they said that the HST is a tax grab at a time when a recession has already taken its toll on the provincial economy.

"It will only worsen job losses and economic difficulty for most residents of British Columbia. Those hardest hit will be low-income earners who will see more of their limited incomes go to the cost of everyday items not now taxed with the PST.

"For starters, it means that almost everything on Haida Gwaii will be more expensive. That's because B.C. Ferries will have to charge the new tax on its fares, freight companies, 7 percent for heating fuel, hydro, non-prescription medicines, other businesses including restaurants, animal feed, fishing charters, school supplies, home building and maintenance. In a recession when many communities are hurting, this is only going to further harm local economies.

"On these islands where tourism is important, the impact of increased costs to visitors could be very negative. It's up to the province to decide whether or not to implement the tax. It's the duty of our elected officials to lobby against the tax since polls suggest that 85 percent of all British Columbians are against it. It's time for us and our local politicians to stand up and say no to the HST."

That's what we're going to be doing on this side of the House. We're going to join the 85 to 90 percent of British Columbians that are going to say no to the HST.

The Council of Tourism Associations have indicated that it's going to cost 10,000 tourism jobs and up to \$545 million in lost revenue, and it's going to have a disproportionate impact on rural tourism development opportunities. They say that this government told British Columbians during the election campaign they were not going to bring in the HST. No studies were done on the impact and the effect on the tourism industry. They've got a real concern about this.

Manitoba recently confirmed that the HST will hurt their consumers. Their report, *Sales Tax Harmonization in Manitoba: What it Would Mean*, says that an HST in Manitoba would mean consumers would pay over \$400 million more in provincial sales tax. But that would be

quite a bit higher in our province because our population is nearly four times as much.

Manitoba looked carefully at the implementation and decided not to adopt it. With this government, they said during the election they wouldn't do it. As soon as it was.... They said they would do it without consultation and without analysis.

Now, we have a long road to ensure opportunities for British Columbians. Many are struggling right now. Many in my riding and rural ridings throughout the province are struggling to make ends meet so they can support their families. We have to ensure that there are more opportunities. We have to ensure that business people, young entrepreneurs get the support they need.

Hon. M. Polak: It is indeed a pleasure to rise to speak to the throne speech in this wonderful and privileged place that we have to serve. But in particular, it is a privilege to be here on such an historic occasion not only with the Prime Minister having spoken to the House earlier today but also with the welcoming of the world to British Columbia officially tomorrow with the lighting of the Olympic cauldron at B.C. Place. What could be a better time to have the chance to address the future of our province in this House but today, Madam Speaker.

[1715]

I want to first of all take the time to just thank those who each and every day are doing their part to support me in the work that I do in this House and on behalf of my constituents. I want to thank first and foremost my daughter and my father, who invariably watch on television and give me tips about how well or sometimes how not well I'm doing. I thank them for the support that they give me and also for the incredible amount of patience that they have had for me and for the schedule that, of course, this job entails.

I also want to thank two very special people who work in my office in Langley — to Cathy and to Katy. They are just a tremendous asset. The community knows and loves them, and I couldn't get along without them. They are a tremendous asset not only to me but to my constituents in Langley.

But of course, the big news in British Columbia is that the Olympics are here and we are about to welcome the world. We have seen the torch travel to 266 communities — I think it's even more than that — in British Columbia. I had the distinct pleasure of being present to welcome the torch to Langley. I'm doubly blessed, because in my riding I have two communities that were receiving the torch.

First it came to Langley township, to the beautiful Langley Events Centre, and I don't think anyone has ever seen anything like it in the township of Langley. There were at least 15,000 people who were packed into the parking lot. They were there early, awaiting the excitement of the arrival of the flame. It was so packed that in

the residences behind the parking lot, there were people standing on their rooftops to be able to watch the arrival of the flame.

When our gold-medal-winning Paralympian Lauren Barwick entered that group of people — to the cheering, to the support of that crowd... That was just an incredible moment to have her enter that group, come up on stage and light the Olympic cauldron in the township of Langley.

It really was a tremendous event, and our thanks and our gratitude have to be expressed to the organizers and, in particular, for all of those in the community who volunteered to help to get that event going and have it be the tremendous success that it was.

I also had the privilege of welcoming the torch to Langley city later that day, and that had an even more touching moment involved with it. Many will recall that in the House today the Premier mentioned a very special lady who was there present at that ceremony. Her name is Doreen Walker. Doreen Walker is terminally ill. She had a very special wish. She, in her last amount of time, wanted to have the opportunity to witness the Olympic torch coming to Langley.

This was not going to be a small endeavour. There were great challenges to overcome. Her nurses and her doctor put together an effort that eventually involved our Langley city and township firefighters, who saw to it that Doreen was able to be there on the sidewalk, right in front, and able to help all of us, thousands of us in Langley city welcome the Olympic torch to our town. Doreen wasn't the only one. I also want to acknowledge the presence of Grace Ellett, age 99, and Alma Clark, age 101.

It's just an example of how the torch provides such hope, such optimism. It inspires us in terms of our love for our great country. It inspires us in terms of our love for our communities and that togetherness we feel at an event like that.

We were there. We watched as Nancy Jensen carried the torch to the stage, and I want to acknowledge the other torchbearers in Langley city: Mona McClymont, James Pitblado, Celia Pereira, Chris Steunenberg, Pat Brethour, Margaret Langford, Richard Nilson, Paul Winston and Doug Jensen. I'm sorry for any of those whose names I have just mispronounced.

It's an example of how one symbol can have such a tremendous amount of power when it is backed by the

hope and the aspirations of so many of us in our communities around British Columbia and indeed around the world.

[1720]

Throughout its history the Olympics has been a point of rallying for those who wish to see peace and understanding conveyed around the globe through sport. It is indeed a movement. It is more than the television commercials and the sporting events that we'll witness on our own televisions. It truly is a movement that inspires us to do better in all areas of our lives.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

These are the emotions that we all share and are touched by as we watch the torch pass through our communities, and in Langley that was no different. In Langley this past year we've seen some tremendous support from government. We've seen support in the area of infrastructure with the 208th Street expansion. We've seen support in the area of the Nicomekl bridge announcement.

I know that there are great things to come for Langley as we look into the future and as I recall the different announcements that were made in the throne speech for the future of not just Langley but the province.

Mr. Speaker, noting the hour, I would like to reserve my right to continue, and I would move adjournment of the debate.

Hon. M. Polak moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. B. Penner: I know that this is a very special moment. I move adjournment.

Hon. B. Penner moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 1, at 10 a.m.

The House adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

HANSARD SERVICES

Director
Jo-Anne Kern

Manager of Print Production
Robert Sutherland

Post-Production Team Leader
Christine Fedoruk

Editorial Team Leaders
Laurel Bernard, Janet Brazier, Robyn Swanson

Senior Editor — Galleys
Heather Bright

Technical Operations Officers
Pamela Holmes, Emily Jacques, Dan Kerr

Indexers
Shannon Ash, Julie McClung, Robin Rohrmoser

Researchers
Jaime Apolonio, Mike Beninger, Brant Felker

Editors
Anton Baer, Aaron Ellingsen, Deirdre Gotto, Margaret Gracie,
Jane Grainger, Betsy Gray, Iris Gray, Linda Guy, Barb Horricks,
Bill Hrick, Paula Lee, Nicole Lindsay, Donna McCloskey,
Bob McIntosh, Anne Maclean, Constance Maskery, Jill Milkert,
Lind Miller, Lou Mitchell, Karol Morris, Dorothy Pearson,
Erik Pedersen, Peggy Pedersen, Janet Pink, Amy Reiswig,
Heather Warren, Arlene Wells, Glenn Wigmore

Published by British Columbia Hansard Services,
and printed under the authority of the Speaker.

Printing Agent
Crown Publications, Queen's Printer for British Columbia
563 Superior St., Victoria, B.C. V8W 9V7
Toll-Free: 1-800-663-6105 Telephone: (250) 387-6409
Fax: (250) 387-1120 E-mail: crown@crownpub.bc.ca

Rates
Single issue, \$2.85; per calendar year, mailed daily, \$396. GST extra.

www.leg.bc.ca

Hansard Services publishes transcripts both in print and on the Internet.
Chamber debates are broadcast on television and webcast on the Internet.
Question Period podcasts are available on the Internet.