



3rd Session, 37th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF

DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

(HANSARD)

Monday, October 21, 2002

Morning Sitting

Volume 9, Number 1

THE HONOURABLE CLAUDE RICHMOND, SPEAKER

ISSN 0709-1281

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

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3RD SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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Morning Sitting

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2002

The House met at 10:05 a.m.

Prayers.

Private Members' Statements

PHYSICAL FITNESS

B. Kerr: Last week we had our MLA weight loss weigh-in, and I made some lighthearted comments to the House in the spirit of the competition. I would like to continue to talk today about physical fitness, but I would like to stress that this is an issue that should be taken seriously, as it not only impacts greatly on our public health care system but affects the day-to-day life and quality of life of every British Columbian.

In today's society it's easy to be sedentary and inactive. It's easy to stay at home and be entertained by the hundreds of television channels. For younger people, video games are increasingly popular. More and more time is spent in front of the computer screens surfing the Net, and of course, automobiles take us easily from point A to point B.

[1010]

Compared to 50, 25 or even 15 years ago, we spend less time in physical activity and more time as couch potatoes. Health statistics bear this out: 27 percent of British Columbians are considered to be overweight, with an additional 15 percent carrying some additional weight.

More troubling is the fitness of children. One of every four children in Canada is considered overweight. A Canadian Medical Association study covering the 15 years up to 1996 found that obesity in youth has increased by 50 percent. A study published as recently as April 22, 2002, found that while people around the world are getting heavier, Canadian kids are packing on the pounds at an alarming rate. Obesity brings with it a host of physical problems, including diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and, ultimately, heart disease.

As a chartered accountant, I am concerned about the financial impact that unhealthy lifestyles have on an already strained public health care system. As a grandparent and MLA, I'm also concerned about the impact of unhealthy lifestyles on families in British Columbia. By all means, people should be comfortable with their bodies and be free to live as they choose. However, there is a place for leadership on this issue for those who would like to pursue healthier lifestyles and need the encouragement and structure to do so.

I think one way to do this is to focus on our young people. As mentioned, obesity is on the rise with young people. Despite the lure of B.C.'s outdoors, it is tempting to stay inside and feast on all the activities offered by today's entertainment world. It's easy to snack on junk food instead of having a more balanced diet.

How do we make a difference? How do we improve the collective health of our young people? One

way is to make physical fitness a higher priority in our schools. Having gone through the MLA fitness challenge over the last few months, working out regularly and shedding some pounds, I feel better, I feel sharper, and I have more energy to tackle the challenges and demands of our position. I know a similar effect was felt by the other MLAs who took up the challenge to get in better shape.

Another example is a note I received from someone named Ian, who decided to take control of his health. Employed at a desk job, not exercising regularly, his weight increased and health declined over a ten-year period. Over the last two years he worked out on a regular basis. He's eating better, and he's shed over 100 pounds. Instead of being a candidate for heart disease, he's never been healthier.

We've all heard stories like this, and they are an inspiration to all of us who would like to be more fit. For students, the opportunity for more physical fitness would be a good complement to the demands of their studies. This is not a panacea nor the answer for all students or individuals, but a higher emphasis on physical fitness would have a net positive effect on the health of our young people.

Accordingly, I fully support the Minister of Education's proposal to reintroduce physical education as a compulsory course for grades 11 and 12. Our schools are more than just factories that churn out university and college applicants. They play a huge role in the personal development of our young people. Teaching students the benefits of a healthy lifestyle is as important as teaching them the three Rs.

Having regular exercise and keeping fit is one side of the equation. The other side is having a balanced diet. Losing weight is not an end in itself. In fact, as you all know, excessive weight loss can be life-threatening. The focus for students and for all of us should be wellness and fitness. We should be giving students the tools to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, the ball is in each of our own courts to decide how we want to lead our lives, but we can lead and promote the benefits of physical fitness to our youth and indeed to people of all ages. Thank you.

Hon. C. Clark: My many thanks to the member for an insightful and very thoughtful private member's statement this morning. I'm delighted to be able to respond very briefly.

A couple of comments. The first is with respect to the proposal to make physical education mandatory in grades 11 and 12. This member isn't the first member to stand up and talk about this. Our member from Saanich has also stood up and made that recommendation as well. The Select Standing Committee on Health has made a comment about that, as has the BCMA and a whole host of other health-related organizations and education organizations.

The value, to me, in doing that is precisely as the member has pointed out. It's to give young people a

better shot at an active lifestyle after they graduate. There is no question at all that getting young people involved in sports and in activity before they graduate from high school will affect their behaviour when they graduate.

[1015]

That's one good reason to do it. Another good reason to do it is that there is a ton of evidence to support the fact that cognitive ability is improved when someone is active. Young people who are active during the school day are that much more ready to go back and learn in the afternoon or in the morning after they've had a gym class. Their brains are working faster and better; their cognitive ability is improved. That's what we should all be working toward in education — making sure that young people go to school, go to class, as ready as they can to learn what we're able to teach them.

The Premier has often said — and he's absolutely correct — that education is the best economic development tool. It's the best preventative health care system that we've yet invented in the world. We should maximize the benefits that we get from our education system. My view is that one of the ways to do that is to make phys ed a compulsory course in grades 11 and 12 for every young child in British Columbia.

We're in the middle of consultation on that — talking to the public; talking to parents; talking to students, who I might say have sometimes quite opposing views on this proposal; talking to teachers, administrators and school districts; talking to citizens in general about what they'd like to see in their high school curriculum. We want to make sure we hear from the public, and I'd encourage anyone who is interested in this subject to log on to our website, send us an e-mail and let us know what they think.

I think the member for Malahat-Juan de Fuca has an excellent point in suggesting that physical education be compulsory in grades 11 and 12. I couldn't agree with him more. The question now is: what does the public think? Thank you very much.

B. Kerr: Well, I would like to thank the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education for responding to my statement. I commend her for her leadership in this issue. I note the Deputy Premier herself has led by example by undergoing her own personal fitness regime, and her young son will certainly learn from her example.

The Premier has often said that a key to a sustainable health care system is a first-class education system. Education and good health go hand in hand. The benefits of a fit population on our health care system are considerable. Studies show that an increase in participation in fitness saves health costs, but more importantly, physical fitness leads to a healthier life, increased self-esteem, heightened energy and longer life expectancy.

There are many more ideas to explore in terms of working toward a more fit population, and the initiative of the Minister of Education is a good healthy start.

PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN: THE AMBER ALERT PLAN

B. Penner: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm going to speak about protecting our most precious resource. It's not oil, it's not gold, and it's not even our forests. It's our children.

In the past year or so, many people, including myself, have been repeatedly outraged and saddened by numerous abductions and slayings of innocent young children by sexual predators. I cannot begin to adequately describe my feelings of contempt and loathing for people who commit these horrific crimes against defenceless children. Nothing could be more cowardly or disgusting.

Whether the children were abducted here in British Columbia, elsewhere in Canada or somewhere in the United States, we are all horrified by what has become an all-too-familiar scenario. A young child is reported missing. Frantic parents ask for help. Police and volunteers conduct neighbourhood searches. Then, sometime later, a body is recovered. Grieving loved ones are left with nothing but imponderable questions, such as why and what if.

I know all of us in this chamber have been saddened by these types of events, and we find ourselves asking if there's anything we could do differently to prevent the monsters which seem to dwell among us in society from taking more young lives. In response to this question, a voluntary partnership is springing up in many different jurisdictions to help law enforcement officials quickly find abducted children.

Called an AMBER plan, a provincewide or statewide emergency alert system gives police access to commercial radio and television frequencies during the critical minutes following an initial child abduction report to local authorities. The goal is to disseminate accurate information as broadly as possible, with details of the missing child, descriptions of suspicious vehicles and possible suspects and other information. In some ways this is similar to the system used to warn the public about severe weather emergencies.

The initial AMBER alert plan was created in memory of nine-year-old Amber Hagerman, who was abducted while riding her bicycle near her home in Arlington, Texas, in 1996. A neighbour was able to provide details about the car and abductor to law enforcement officials, but no system was in place to get the information to local residents quickly. Sadly, Amber's body was found four days later.

[1020]

This senseless tragedy shocked and outraged the entire community. Residents contacted radio stations in the Dallas-Fort Worth area and suggested they broadcast special alerts over the airwaves so they could help prevent such dreadful outcomes in the future.

In response to the community's concern for the safety of local children, the Dallas-Fort Worth Association of Radio Managers teamed up with local law enforcement agencies and developed an innovative early warning system to help find abducted children. There

are more than 25 states in the U.S. with AMBER alert systems in place. So far, the systems are credited with saving 34 children, including a high-profile case this past August when two teenaged girls were abducted in Orange County in California. The girls were found about 12 hours later just as it appeared their abductor was about to kill them.

In a very real sense, these systems are a public-private partnership. Government officials receive the initial information and assess whether it justifies activating the alert system, which then relies on privately owned media outlets to get the message out to the public. Strict criteria must be applied to prevent false alarms. If there are too many false alarms, the public will not be as responsive to an AMBER alert.

While the criteria applied by different jurisdictions may vary, in general, they include a determination by law enforcement that, firstly, someone under 18 has been abducted against their will; secondly, the child is in danger of serious bodily harm; and third, there is enough descriptive information about the child, abductor and the suspect's vehicle to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help find the child. If these criteria are met, alert information is put together for public distribution.

Contrary to some reports, a large electronic billboard along a roadside is not required for an AMBER alert system. These billboards have proven very useful in California and elsewhere and certainly provide an enhancement in terms of quickly disseminating information, but they are not a requirement for establishing an alert system in a particular area.

The essential ingredient, though, is a coherent, well-thought-out communication plan. Typically, once law enforcement agencies have assessed the information and applied relevant criteria to determine whether to use the AMBER alert, the information is faxed to radio stations. The information is also sent to TV stations and cable systems, so it can immediately be broadcast to millions of listeners and viewers. Radio stations interrupt their programming to announce the AMBER alert, and television stations and cable systems run a crawl on the screen with a photo of the child. The media continues to alert the public every 15 minutes with pertinent details that may lead to the safe return of the child.

In child abduction cases, time is of the essence. According to a study by the U.S. Department of Justice, in 74 percent of homicide abductions, the child is killed within the first three hours. Two weeks ago Washington State Governor Gary Locke announced plans for a statewide AMBER alert system in his state. It is my hope that some form of an AMBER alert system can also be developed for British Columbia. I look forward to hearing the remarks of the Solicitor General, who I believe already has been looking into this idea for British Columbia.

Hon. R. Coleman: I thank the member for Chilliwack-Kent for his comments this morning. The AMBER alert system in the United States is an acronym, of

course, as the member has described, which basically is America's Missing: Broadcast Emergency Response system in the case of child abduction.

When the subject was first brought to me, I said that obviously we would like to enhance anything we have in British Columbia that would meet the goals of AMBER alert in the United States for our children in Canada. We will be having this on the agenda, actually, of the federal-provincial justice ministers' conference later this month with regards to how we can enhance the Canadian Missing Children's Registry maintained by the RCMP.

I should tell the House, first of all, that the ministry is coordinating a number of projects that already are portions of what has been a successful AMBER alert system in other jurisdictions. One of the primary ones is that in British Columbia we are rolling out an initiative called PRIME-BC. PRIME-BC is basically a police records information management environment that we will have across the province. This government has committed to give my ministry the funds to do this in every community across the province. It's a project that really will allow for real-time information to be in the car and at the hands of every police officer in British Columbia no matter what the crime.

[1025]

This is a system that's been developed in British Columbia. It's been endorsed by the RCMP, and I believe it will be a system that people will look to in the future and say that somebody was ahead of the curve on information management for policing.

The law enforcement information portal, which is a project that we have, provides a means for the PRIME-BC system to automatically post information to other agencies such as customs, ports, airport security and those type of things. In addition to that, we're always working on our relationships with media and our relationships for that information. For situations like this, we actually have some initiatives signed between ourselves and various jurisdictions on the lower island, particularly with all the media outlets, where we can move information quickly.

Another aspect of the AMBER system that has been implemented in B.C. is the centralization of communications for multiple areas. The establishment of emergency communications for southwest British Columbia, which is E-Comm, was established in the lower mainland, and we're presently working on a project called CREST on the lower island, so we can centralize communications.

The critical thing is a quick ability to pass information through law enforcement and all agencies with regards to a missing child. I believe our system in PRIME, conducted with our communications system, will be key aspects of that and will only be enhanced by other initiatives that we can bring forward which have been dealt with and tried in other jurisdictions.

I was pleased, when I was first asked about the AMBER alert system, to be able to go back to the ministry. I said I would review it, and if there were anything we could enhance, we would put it into the province. I

was pleased to see that we're already moving in different directions to make sure we have the integrated system necessary and pleased to know that a lot of the things other jurisdictions were doing, we're already doing in this province, and we're moving forward because of the initiatives that this ministry has taken in the past 12 months.

I'm pleased that we're going to put it on the agenda of the federal-provincial justice ministers at the end of October and that we will move forward with any initiative we can to make this happen and improve it across British Columbia, and I look forward to long-term success in this area.

B. Penner: I would like to thank the minister for his remarks.

In order to protect our young people, there are a number of things that parents can do. More than 90 percent of the time, sexual predators prey on children they have access to. In other words, the attacker is not necessarily a stranger but likely lives or works nearby.

Predators often engage in what is referred to as grooming, a process meant to establish trust with children and perhaps their parents. Children need to be taught that no one has the right to ask them to do anything that makes them feel physically uncomfortable. That includes being told to get into a car, entering a home, or asking to see or touch private parts of their or someone else's body, even if they know the person. Children need to know that it is okay to say no to an adult. Teach your children to trust their instinct and speak their mind if someone is making them feel uncomfortable.

Parents should familiarize themselves with their neighbours and their vehicles. If you see a person or car you don't recognize, take note and report any behaviour that looks suspicious.

It's important to know where your children are at all times. Know who your children's friends are, their families and their addresses. While you're at it, make sure your children know their home address and their home phone number. Encourage kids to play in groups.

Have a family code word to be used in situations where you can't pick your child up from school and need to send someone else. Let your children know you would never send someone that they don't know or without notifying the school first and without using the code word.

Although it may be uncomfortable, teach your children the sick tricks that people use to lure kids. They need to know someone may pretend to be looking for a lost puppy or to be lost and looking for direction themselves.

If you see a child in a public place unaccompanied by an adult, look around for a parent. Keep an eye out for that child. If, God forbid, you are certain your child is missing, call 911 immediately. Too many calls are made too late.

I support tougher sentences for child abusers and an expanded use of Canada's fairly new DNA database

to help catch these criminals in the first place — something I may have more to say about on another occasion here — and the development of an AMBER alert system for B.C. But even if all these measures are adopted, there is still a vital role for each of us to play in keeping our children safe.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker.

[1030]

B.C. INNOVATIONS

K. Manhas: Mr. Speaker, today I want to take this opportunity to speak about B.C.'s innovations challenge. I want to talk about our successes and innovations and about our challenges. I want to talk about the future we can have in British Columbia, the future we deserve. I want to talk about building towards a future in the northeast sector of the lower mainland.

We must each — community leaders, business people, educators and citizens — realize and act on our important role in achieving a future filled with opportunity and prosperity in British Columbia. I believe fostering a climate of innovations and ingenuity is our key to developing a competitive advantage in the world market. Our investment in our human capital — the education, training and development of our people — will build the foundation we need to ensure the future success of our province.

We often talk about value-added when we refer to the processing of our raw resources in B.C., but before we are truly able to add value to our products, we must ensure we've added value to our people. Our people and made-in-B.C. innovations will determine our province's future standpoint and stature in the global market. The factors governing a firm's economic success in the past such as economies of scale, low production costs, availability of resources and low transportation costs still contribute to a firm's economic success today.

However, knowledge has become a key driver of economic performance. Thomas Homer-Dixon, in his book *The Ingenuity Gap*, defines ingenuity as sets of instructions that tell us how to arrange the constituent parts of our physical and social worlds in ways that help us achieve our goals. The Industry Canada report *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity* defines innovation as the process by which new economic and social benefits are extracted from knowledge.

Through innovation, knowledge is applied to the development of new products and services or to new ways of designing, producing or marketing an existing product or service for public and private markets. The term innovation refers to both the creative process, the application of knowledge and the outcome of that process. Innovations can be world-first, new to Canada or simply new to the organization that applies them. Innovation has always been a driving force in economic growth and social development, but in today's knowledge-based economy the importance of innovation has increased dramatically.

Today innovations fostered in B.C. are already changing the world and creating huge social and economic benefits for the province. Innovations in fuel cell technology, biotechnology, information technology, telecommunications, software and others are creating an economic and competitive advantage for B.C. A recent Deloitte and Touche report found that 12 of the 50 fastest-growing technology companies are from British Columbia. That's 25 percent of the national total — not bad for a province that only accounts for 12 percent of the country's population and, until last year, less than its share of the national economy.

The reality is that like begets like; success attracts further success. The innovative successes in the fields I mentioned are prompting more research and development, attracting more business to B.C., and they're generating spinoffs and spinoff ventures. The ideas have generated knowledge. The knowledge amassed in B.C. will pave the way for new B.C. ventures, create more jobs and build B.C. as a world-class place to invest.

If we think big, think beyond the horizon at what we would want to be or to achieve, are audacious, dare to dream; if we use our resources to find new solutions to the challenges facing the world in health, industry, the environment and our social affairs; if we give our youth and our citizens the exposure to fields and industry so they understand the challenges facing us, then challenge them to find solutions to the problems.... To understand the complexities and the problems in the world, people must be exposed to the issues. No one can solve a problem in a field they have no knowledge of. Even Einstein could not have come up with the theory of relativity without any prior knowledge of physics. If we encourage innovations and recognize innovative ideas, even if they're from new, younger or junior members in our organizations in our own fields of expertise or endeavour.... We must find the key, the technology, the knowledge, the new innovation, the key that others in the world are looking for that pushes us to the forefront of our fields of endeavour.

If we focus on the possibilities and achievement goals in our core industries, if we reward risk-taking, if we take some risks on our own knowing that we have the ability to achieve and excel, we can lead our industries. We may not always succeed, but it takes great faith and often big risks to achieve big rewards. If we create a culture that encourages entrepreneurship, risk-taking and trying out new and innovative ideas; if we focus on our strengths in this province, our people and our natural assets; if we do these things, there's nothing, no goal, no aspiration, no task that we can't accomplish right here in British Columbia.

[1035]

You know, in travelling through B.C., as I've had the opportunity in this last year and a half, it's become apparent to me that forestry is the backbone of this province, and we should recognize that fact with pride. My family's history, like that of many others in B.C., stemmed from the rich endowments that our forests

provide. Through the generations since my grandfather first arrived here as a teenager in the 1920s, B.C. has depended on our forests, this green gold.

Now people are talking about green buildings. There's a big shift in moving back to wood in modern, high-performance buildings. There are forestry companies up north shipping wood pellets out of Prince Rupert to sell to foreign countries looking at alternative energy sources, a new and different market for our B.C. wood products.

As we look forward, not only should we be proud of our wood products, we should look to an innovative forestry technology sector that leads the world. We have tremendous riches in our natural resources. We must capitalize on that wealth. How we do that depends on our ability to innovate and to sink our teeth in, find and test different techniques, ideas, products and solutions.

For example, B.C., a province synonymous with its forests, should be a world leader in forestry technology. B.C. should be on the leading edge of the world in advanced wood processing technologies. Yet sadly, if you walk through a modern, technologically advanced lumber mill in B.C. today, you will find more machinery and technology from Europe than you will from Canada.

We have the natural advantage; let's use it. We have to decide where we want to be in the future, individually and collectively. We have to dream about where that could be and then find a way to make that a reality.

Hon. S. Bond: I want to thank the member for his comments about innovation. I want to take up the challenge and say to you that this is a government prepared to think big and to look at the issues of innovation. We are looking at an agenda that is exciting and dynamic in this province, which will address some of the concepts you've shared with us today.

We believe British Columbia's biggest and most important resource is the people that live here. We believe we need to invest in training and skills and opportunities to increase innovation in this province.

We are improving B.C.'s business environment as we speak, and that ensures that we will be competitive and attract investment to this province. We have a leading track in technology transfer, and we are increasing connectivity around this province. That's absolutely essential to creating a culture for innovation in the province.

We're beginning to look at the serious challenges facing us in this area of skills shortages, and we are increasing post-secondary opportunities so that B.C. companies can have the skilled and innovative graduates they need.

It's important to note that we have the third-largest and fastest-growing biotech sector in this country, and we want to harness its future potential. I'm sure you don't need to be reminded that just this past Friday, along with the Premier, we were at QLT, which is one of the leading companies in biotech in Canada, to an-

nounce \$95 million in capital funding to support the doubling of opportunities for graduates in this province in the high-tech sector. That is an amazing good-news story, and it will help attract the kinds of companies and the kinds of investment we require in British Columbia to have an aggressive innovation strategy.

We simply want to attract more research and development to this province. That's why we're using a coordinated cross-ministerial approach as we look at ways to enhance the amount of resources we are putting into the province.

We've identified four key priorities. We want to improve B.C.'s business environment, we want to increase research and development, we want to increase connectivity in the province, and we need to address skills shortages by revitalizing our workforce. If we focus on these key items, we will ensure that we have a culture and an opportunity for innovative strategies in the province.

We also want to build on B.C.'s traditional strengths, and the member mentioned, in particular, the areas of forestry. It's exciting to look at the work being done in forest technology around the province. We have to enhance those opportunities, and we need to support them as they continue to grow.

[1040]

We've also begun investing significant provincial funding in a life sciences centre, which will bring together world-class, multidisciplinary faculty, researchers and graduate students to work in an environment of state-of-the-art infrastructure and equipment at the University of British Columbia, with satellite opportunities at the Universities of Victoria and Northern British Columbia.

The list is long as we look at what this government, in a very short period of time, has done to recognize the need to attract the best and brightest and to keep the best and brightest in British Columbia. Over the next number of months we will be urging the federal government to recognize the fabulous work that's been done here in British Columbia on our innovation strategy and encouraging them to look at creating even more investment by looking at putting dollars in British Columbia that are much needed in order to further our innovation agenda.

I believe our coordinated and very targeted approach will ensure that we can build on those areas which already exist in this province where there is strength and innovation, the culture that creates a desire to take risks, to spin off companies that are exciting and will provide benefit to people not just in British Columbia but around the world. We are excited by our agenda, we are prepared to dream big, and we are going to make British Columbia an even more exciting place for people to invest and to work and to create a culture of innovation in this province.

K. Manhas: I would like to thank the minister for her comments and her commitment to the people and students of this province and to the future of our great province. Innovation, skills and training, and research

and development will be the key factors to secure an exciting and leading-edge future for B.C. We must invest in that future today. I know the minister has worked hard to do that, and the initiatives she has mentioned will do that.

I want to take a moment to talk about my region and innovations in that region, the North Fraser, in the northeast sector of the lower mainland. We have a quarter of a million people, more than all of greater Victoria, and we're continuing to grow. We have a population growth strategy; so must we have an economic strategy, an innovations and industry strategy. We have our own successes and some burgeoning opportunities, but there are many areas of technological innovation that may still be exploited. We need to capitalize on that and replicate that.

Innovation builds and thrives in industrial clusters, creating centres of knowledge, excellence and energy. These clusters are fostered through a base of continuing research and development work in the area, a skilled and educated population, and the growth of a strong and vibrant entrepreneurial base of interdependent firms. Ultimately these synergies accelerate the pace of new innovations, attracting investment, stimulating job creation and generating new wealth. Our challenge in the North Fraser region is establishing our base and building on it. The potential is huge and the rewards even bigger.

We need vision and cooperation to ensure that we have achieved the prosperity and success our region is capable of. What we need is people with new ideas to start small companies and for those companies to grow and innovate into medium-sized companies and continue to grow into large companies until they are world leaders in their field. We need those companies to start in B.C., and we need them to stay in B.C.

I'm a strong believer in the free market to solve problems and advance solutions. B.C. was a place that, for years, drove away investment. We need investment in B.C. We need capital and venture capital to realize that B.C. is a good investment. Investment in B.C. leads to investment in B.C. innovations, which leads to better products and better solutions, greater productivity and greater efficiencies and, therefore, not only a better economic situation but a more environmentally friendly one too.

Our challenge is evident, but time does not sit still. Innovations are everyone's business. It is everyone's responsibility to think about our future. Tough situations are often the most significant windows to opportunity. We must shift our focus from the difficult, oftentimes consuming and painful situations we find ourselves in to focus on how to overcome the challenges and seize the opportunities therein. We owe it to ourselves, to each other, to our youth and to our future generations.

[1045]

I. Chong: I seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

I. Chong: Today visiting us is a grade 6 class with 37 students and three teachers, I think led by Mr. Stuart Brambley from Glenlyon-Norfolk School. I see them up in the gallery smiling down and watching and listening to the debates very intensely. I would ask the House to please make them all very, very welcome.

S. Brice: I, too, rise in the House and join with my colleague from Oak Bay-Gordon Head in acknowledging the students here from Glenlyon-Norfolk today. If you will pardon me a personal moment, I would like to acknowledge the fact that one of the teachers with them is my son, Duncan Brice. These students, as it turns out, will be among the first of the students who, after touring these legislative precincts, can go back to the classroom and use the CD produced through your good offices, *Discover Your Legislature*, and will be able to use this learning opportunity today in an ongoing way back in their classroom. I, too, ask you to make them very welcome.

Debate Continued

TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP

B. Lekstrom: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and good morning. Today I rise in the House to speak about an issue that's very important to all British Columbians: the issue of the trades and the quality of our workers that we have in our province.

As we all get a little older, we appreciate the importance of our education a little bit more every day, and we all realize the value of different kinds of education, whether it's university, college or the trades. The value of the trades is sometimes forgotten about and neglected and relegated to a third option when we talk about what we're going to do with the future and our children, when they look to their futures, which are bright for each and every one. The possibility of a future in trades is often, as I indicated, the third option and is sometimes presented in a poor light, which certainly doesn't give our children growing up a feeling that the trades is a valued and worthwhile profession to look towards in the future. The reality is that trades offer a great opportunity and provide job satisfaction and a wage that will allow you to support your family into the future.

I'll just touch on a few areas of different trades and the wages they can earn. Meat cutters, for example, earn up to \$27 an hour. We look at a heavy-duty mechanic that earns between \$24 and \$30 per hour. Locksmiths can earn up to \$25 per hour. A journeyman plumber — and I know that if it's like my area, it's a difficult profession to find when you're in need — earns up to \$27 per hour. Welders and carpenters, again, earn a very, very good living, a living that allows them to provide for their families and their children and the future of their children. Aircraft maintenance technicians can make up to \$50,000 per year.

These are good jobs, and we need to remove the stigma that comes from being in the trades. We also have to remove the feeling that if you want to focus on the trades, you're taking a second-rate step into the future. I think I can speak for all tradespeople in this province and in this country that it's certainly something each of them is very proud of. It's an accomplishment they take very, very seriously and a commitment we need, as British Columbians and Canadians, to have these highly qualified and trained individuals in our society to deliver the services we all need.

It was estimated in 1998 that of the 700,000 jobs expected to be created over ten years, more than 60 percent will be in the trades and technology industry. There are challenges in this twenty-first century workplace, challenges that we have never encountered before. Some, such as demographics, we can't control. Baby-boomers are starting to retire. It's a fact that in a mere eight years, more people will be exiting the workforce than will be entering it, a staggering piece of information when you sit back and think about what that really means and what it means to British Columbia. We can change this, but it is our responsibility to ensure that these workers are there to fill in the gap and the skills gap that exists today.

[1050]

Over the last decade there has been a rapid advance in technology, redefining how some industries are operating. We need to ensure that the quality of the education and training meets the demand of this looming skills shortage. Removing the disconnect between what industry needs and what the current educational system is providing is something we all have to strive towards. We need to aggressively change the existing attitudes about industry training. We need to promote it as a top-of-mind career choice rather than, as I indicated previously, a third option, which seems so prevalent right now in our system.

I think the last point is probably the most incredible point. Essentially, we're having to buck decades of misinformation and, in many cases, an ingrained bias about the validity of industry training and the incredible opportunities available to those who choose to pursue it.

In my hometown one of the success stories has been the aircraft maintenance engineer program delivered at Northern Lights College. This 15-month course attracts people from across Canada and fills the need for the industry, a need that's very prevalent out there in our society. I'm very proud of the area, Peace River South, that I represent and the partnerships I see up there trying to come to a solution, to fill that skills gap that exists out there.

The partnerships between Northern Lights College, school district 59, BCIT and private business have come together on a number of fronts. We offer different courses for our kids growing up in the schools and making a decision. They may not want to choose university, but they know that they're certainly interested in a career that will allow them to supply for their fam-

ily, make a good living. Far too often, I think, in my career.... Growing up — and I'm not that old — you go to school, and everybody seems to want to focus on university. University is certainly worthwhile. I'm not here to undermine the issue of going to university or college. But it seemed that if somebody thought they wanted to be a heavy-duty mechanic or if they wanted to be a welder or a carpenter or a meat cutter, well, that was something that was for the people that couldn't go to university.

I want to tell you that that's the wrong attitude and an attitude that I'm going to do everything in my power to work with my colleagues — and I know they understand — to change. We have to focus on what the needs and wants of our children coming through our school system are. It seems incredible to me that we can have a student in grade 10 who knows at that point in his career that university isn't of interest to him. He may want to be a welder or a plumber, but he feels somewhat held back because it doesn't seem that if he chooses that career, he's going to be supported through the system or by the people that he's with.

I know that my colleagues in this House understand what we have to do to get things back on track and make sure that the trades issue is not presented as a third option within our system, but that it ranks up there equally as important as university or college. I know that the minister has worked very hard and continues to work hard to meet these challenges and meet these demands for British Columbians.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in this House. I look forward to working with the people I represent in Peace River South, and all British Columbians, to come up with new, innovative ways in which we can move the trades training issue forward in our province. It's my commitment to all of my colleagues here that I'm there to do what I can when I can, and it's a commitment that I will live by. I have a history in the trades, from my father to my brother. I worked in the communications industry as well, and I know that every member of my family is very proud of what they've accomplished in their career.

With that, I will sit down and look for the response from the minister.

Hon. S. Bond: I very much appreciate the comments from the member for Peace River South. I always look forward and enjoy the opportunity to speak about the skills training situation and agenda in this province.

I certainly would concur that there is absolutely a need for a strong trades training component within the education system. Certainly, demographics and the current situation would tell us that several sectors in British Columbia in particular are facing challenges: the construction and industrial trade area, where the lack of new workers in some trades is growing rapidly; the health care professions, where highly publicized shortages combined with the aging of the current workforce put the future at risk; and also the need for

new workers in the areas of information technology and engineering. We have a great deal of work to do.

[1055]

Having said that, I am perhaps most concerned about the comments made about the attitude towards skills and training in much of society. There was indeed a report written called *The Third Option*, which describes the concern that some students feel in terms of the reaction to a choice to pursue a trade or a skill in the province. I think a student was quoted in that report as saying that when you want to pursue a skill or a trade, you can often be considered a second-class citizen in the system.

That is simply unacceptable and inappropriate. We are currently having discussions with industry, within the public post-secondary education system and with private providers to talk about how we can begin to shift to the culture of thinking that suggests, just as the member for Peace River South did, this is a equal choice when students are making a decision about their futures in the province. The member noted some of the wage rates, for example, that skilled workers receive in this province.

There is another factor that's really important, if you were to consider the unemployment rates for people with particular skills in the province. I'd like to reference the 2000-01 Human Resources Development Canada labour force survey, which suggests that when you look at key occupations within the province, they have unemployment rates that are less than half the average of all occupations. Those occupations included engineers, information systems managers, nurses, sheet metal workers and boilermakers. In terms of boilermakers, this group of professions had an unemployment rate of 0.3 percent — about as close to zero as you can get, I would like to suggest.

While there are significant challenges, we also have some demographic advantages in British Columbia. For one thing, we have a larger number of people in the 13-to-19 and five-to-12-year-old age groups, and this will be an important factor in the coming decades. That's particularly true, even more so, for the aboriginal population within this province. They have an enormous potential for a future workforce. We also, if you add to that factor, have been able to attract to British Columbia large numbers of working people from across Canada and around the world. In fact, we've benefited from migration and immigration, as well, in this province.

Simply put, the problem is simply not going to disappear. Our workforce is growing older, and the skills needed to succeed in our economy continue to change. With strong economic growth forecast for the future, the pressure to solve the looming skills shortage will become even greater. If we do not meet the skills challenge, B.C. employers simply will not be able to grow. As was pointed out, the mismatch between the demand versus the supply of skilled workers would result in higher wage costs for employers and a growing gap between the pay for skilled workers and those in

jobs that require a lower level of skill. Action needs to be taken.

What are we doing about that? Prior to the election, we knew the skills challenge would be a significant and high priority for us as government. Solutions must cross their traditional boundaries between sectors. We need to recognize there is a post-secondary sector that needs to be integrated and coordinated rather than working in isolated compartments. Trades and technical training needs to become a central part of a system that also includes an option to go to university or college or institutes.

It is important that our young people have as much positive information as possible about industry training, and we want them to make informed choices, considering this an equal option. We're currently involved in a process. I just ran in from a meeting with my staff on this very subject. We are looking at a new training model for the province. In fact, we have a great agenda, we are excited, and we are moving forward with our skills training agenda in the province.

B. Lekstrom: I would like to thank the minister for her commitment to resolve a problem that has been longstanding within our province.

Again, going back to the focus. Trades training is not a third option. It's an equal option to university, an equal option to college and one that I think, with the commitment of the minister and our colleagues within this Legislative Assembly, we will resolve for all British Columbians.

The key issue is partnerships. I touched on it in Peace River South. As well, I'm sure, they're occurring throughout this province. We can all be proud when we work together rather than in isolation to resolve problems. Problems come at us from all different angles. Certainly, individuals by themselves many times don't have the answers to resolve those problems, but by working together with industry, with government and with individuals, those partnerships and the resolve we look for would come much easier.

[1100]

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that these are equal opportunities for employment in our province, ones that are in demand out there right now. Just the one statement that I'll leave with on this issue of the importance of trades and the training issue within our province is that I want to make sure that every child going through school, whatever their choice.... Whether it's university, whether it's college or whether it's going into the trades for their choice of career, I want them to be proud of their choice and know that they have the full support of the province of British Columbia and the people that live here.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. That concludes private members' statements. We now proceed to public bills in the hands of private members, adjourned debate, Bill M204.

Second Reading of Bills

THE HUNTING AND FISHING HERITAGE ACT (continued)

H. Long: I rise today to conclude my remarks to Bill M204, The Hunting and Fishing Heritage Act, which was introduced by the member for East Kootenay. Mr. Speaker, what does the bill do? This bill will guarantee the right for people who gather food for their families. It guarantees the right which our foreparents took for granted.

The revenues which are generated through fees and licences that hunters and fishers provide will make sure that we can properly fund fish and game programs to maintain a sustainable resource for the future. I believe the right to hunt and fish is a right. I also believe that hunters and fishers are the ones who are most concerned that our natural fish and game are properly funded and that we maintain an abundance for the future.

It's time to guarantee the right to hunt and fish in this province in accordance with the law. I will be supporting this bill in this House, I hope, this session.

K. Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to support the private member's bill from the member for East Kootenay. In British Columbia, as in many areas of Canada, there is a continued gravitation of populations from the rural to urban communities. Along with this movement of people goes our changing priorities and lifestyles — changing lifestyles that are part of this process. There is no question that this rural-urban split plays out in many areas. The availability of education and health services are examples of this gravitation, along with the population base, to urban British Columbia.

It is the urbanites who are leading the charge against logging, mining and hunting activities, while those who actually live in the areas where the resource communities of our provinces are, are saying that they are comfortable with the established balances between the resources extracted, the lifestyle, the jobs provided and the environmental outcomes. It is this mentality of those who are separated from the realities of the acts that is setting the moral and public standards of acceptance for rural activities.

Of all of the above-mentioned activities, there is none which has created such a high level of emotion as those elicited by the act of hunting. Hunting roots in Canada go back to the earliest days of human presence on our continent. For the earliest European settlers, their survival was based on their ability to hunt and fish. The majority of explorations of Canada were first premised upon the pursuit of animals by the first nations people and then by the settlers from Europe. The northwest was opened up by the fur traders, with many of the early western migrations of people following their established routes.

With such a great historical component of our history based on the exploitation of wild game, why is it today that much of our society looks upon hunters with such disgust? There are a number of different perspectives and views within our society about the moral and ethical values of hunting. Many of these views can be delineated by demographic and geographical considerations of our province.

The percentage of the North American population that hunts has been steadily declining since the 1960s, with the non-hunting population at one time thought to be as high as 40 percent. Now the hunting population is as low as 5.1 percent, in a 1996 United States statistical study done by the fish and wildlife branch. This would still include about 13 million Americans who hunt.

[1105]

This hunting community is estimated to spend around \$21 billion in the United States alone with hunting-related activities. Correlating the American stats into British Columbia, with a population of four million — given our higher percentage of aboriginal peoples, higher abundance of game and a greater urban population — we could have as many as 28,000 people that hunt actively in British Columbia. The remaining population of 3.7 million are, therefore, non-hunters.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Non-hunters can be broken down into a number of subgroups: those who have hunted and just don't do it anymore, although they're still supportive of the act; those who have no opinion on the subject and really don't care; and those who are supportive of subsistence hunting but opposed to trophy hunting. Then there are those anti-hunters who are opposed to hunting for a number of other reasons.

The anti-hunters are a mixed bag with a number of subgroups: animal rights activists, wildlife conservationists, gun control supporters and others who just have a moral conflict with the ideas of hunting. It is the anti-hunters who have led the charge against hunting, convincing many that hunters are just participating in a blood sport of no redeeming social value.

The premise of many anti-hunters is that animals have an equal right to exist and that we are incorrect to believe we are superior. It is that level of superiority exhibited by hunters over the feral animals that the anti-hunting establishments advocate targets for the hunters. The connection that is lost with many of the anti-hunters is the established commercial use of animals in a consumptive manner for everyday commodities that include food, drugs and clothing. To this lapse of self-recognition by the anti-hunter, the hunter is quick to respond that at least we have the decency to provide for ourselves and not employ others in the food processing industry to do this work for us.

The reality of the hunting fraternity is that a majority of hunters are great conservationists and exhibit a real interest in maintaining healthy feral populations of game. Ducks Unlimited, a national organization, has

done more for the protection of wetlands in British Columbia and in other areas of North America than all other conservationist groups combined. This organization got its start from a group of concerned, active hunters. Duck hunters still are the prominent members of this organization today. For a consumptive user group like hunters, the motivation is very high to ensure the continued availability of the resource. As in any industry, it's the users that first recognize when an industry is in trouble and are first there to protect it.

With dwindling numbers of hunters, the anti-hunters have been gaining support, especially among the urbanites that hunt down all their foods fully processed and ready for consumption in the aisles of their local supermarkets. This group of people has grown up with a Walt Disney version of Bambi, Donald Duck and Daffy Duck. The realities of wild animals are based on cartoons and images shown on nature shows or at the local game park, and the relationship between these images and the beef in their hamburger does not equate to them.

Although many of the arguments that are put forward have found a following with their fellow urbanites, for the non-hunter the logic to chase a wild game around the bush when there are supermarkets is not a rational one. But for some of us, it's a very active recreational pursuit.

Just a bit of a personal note. This weekend I had the opportunity to go out with a number of my friends into the bush where the member for Yale-Lillooet has his riding. It's an opportunity to meet with people that you don't have time for in your everyday active lives and to put aside a few days a year where you can get out with your friends — some friends I've had from elementary school, some from high school — to touch base with them uninterrupted by cell phones, fax machines and bells in the House. This is a type of opportunity that also promotes, as we talked about earlier, the importance of fitness, health and a well-balanced lifestyle.

Well, there's one thing — when we get into the over-produced, over-hormoned, over-injected beef production — that we see not exhibited by all members of the cattle industry, not all members of the poultry industry, but by some that are just promoted by profits to those urbanites who do all their hunting in the shopping aisles.

[1110]

This gives a person an opportunity to go out and involve themselves in a healthy lifestyle, especially if a person happened to be on a fitness routine. They can go out there and show their buddies how important it is and how much better you can feel after a day when you have a healthy lifestyle. You're out there in the bush. The stories get better in the evening when you have that quiet time with your friends. It gives you an opportunity to catch up.

I just want to say that there's a great opportunity other than to bring back some game. Unfortunately for the big game department, we were unsuccessful, but there was a very good population of quail this year. That's what nature does. It comes in seasons. Some

seasons you have lots, and some others.... The real true hunter, the conservationist in us, only takes what they can use and need. Also, when the supplies are limited, you self-monitor to ensure that you only pick on species that are productive that year.

A great job is done by the people in the fish and wildlife department of our Ministry of Environment, who also regulate the types of game we can take. Then with their surveys they ensure that we do have an active hunting opportunity, which is a great recreational opportunity for the people of British Columbia.

It's not just a recreational opportunity but also an economic opportunity. When we look at what's happening in some of these rural areas with some of the types of activities that are a little slower — some of the forestry and fishing activities — it gives people the right and opportunity to promote some of the other activities in their area, like recreational hunting. It provides employment for guides. It provides employment for those at fishing and hunting stores for materials, camping goods. I'm sure Canadian Tire loves to see hunting season come along because of all the extra outdoor gear they sell.

Hunting is a number of things, but the one thing I haven't touched on is the ability to provide for yourself. Subsistence hunting is really important to many people in British Columbia — those people, again, whose paycheques may be dwindling, and the price of beef is going up. The opportunity to go out and get some wild venison and put it in their freezer is a real economic help to those people.

In closing, I'd just like to say that hunting is a number of things. Hunting is a heritage in British Columbia. It's a cultural awareness for many people. It's an opportunity to participate in the great outdoors. The healthfulness of game meat also helps to improve your diet. I'd just like to say it's a very important part of our heritage and society, and it should continue. The fact of the matter is that in urban settings now the reality for the hunter, as well as attending a social function, is it's really not that popular to admit that occasionally, instead of going hunting down the aisles of the supermarkets, they actually get their dinner at the end of a firearm.

W. Cobb: I also want to rise and speak in favour of Bill M204. I'd like to congratulate the member for East Kootenay for presenting this bill. It was such a good idea that I don't know why I missed the opportunity to do it.

I'd like to talk a little about the preamble and the issues that are brought up in there. There are only three of them.

First: "WHEREAS hunting and fishing are an important part of British Columbia's heritage and form an important part of the fabric of present-day life in British Columbia." I'd like to state that although I no longer hunt, my father hunted. He didn't hunt as a sportsman, but he hunted for food. Many, many people in rural B.C. and, in particular, in my riding still use the game they hunt and the fish they collect as part of their food

over the winter. So I think it's important that we maintain that as part of our heritage.

Second: "WHEREAS hunters and anglers contribute to the understanding, conservation, and management of fish and wildlife in British Columbia." I think the member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows also mentioned the importance of the conservation end of it. Hunters are conservationists. They don't want to deplete that resource. We need their assistance, and I think we need to encourage them to hunt. There are programs available that teach young people to hunt, and I think we need to do that. As the shortage of funds comes at the government level, we need those people to help us in the woods to preserve the wildlife.

[1115]

We have a local group in my riding — actually, they're a group of caribou hunters — who have started a society to protect the caribou herd in the Itcha-Ilgachuz mountains. I think the herd is up to about 2,400 now because of some of the work they've done. They've formed a society to protect that herd so they will be able to continue their right to hunt and have the game to do that in the future.

As the member for Maple Ridge-Mission and the member from Peace River mentioned last week, there is that urban-rural split. I think it is important that not only do those members from urban B.C. get to visit our area, but they get to understand how we live and some of the lifestyles there.

By maintaining this right, it would also help in maintaining our tourism industry. As I head home almost every weekend when the House is sitting, especially in the fall, the highway is full of trucks with campers, boats, trailers, four-wheelers and what not. These people are going out there. They're going out in the woods, and they are hunting. With some of the points that were mentioned here, it's a great time. Usually a great time is had by all. Yet it's also important that those urbanites get the opportunity to understand our lifestyle.

I do fully support the bill and the third whereas: "WHEREAS hunting and fishing should be recognized as a legitimate form of recreation and as legitimate tools with which to effectively manage the fish and wildlife in British Columbia." I think that is important. I mentioned that earlier with the local group that is setting up a society, in fact, to protect some of the game in our mountains.

I fully support this bill, and I truly believe every British Columbian should have the right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law.

D. Chutter: I, too, speak in support of Bill M204, The Hunting and Fishing Heritage Act. I certainly have recognized that many of my colleagues also speak in support of this bill. However, noting a comment from my colleague from Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, I'm going to have to have a brief chat about the beef industry with him.

The recreation activity of hunting and fishing and the sustenance benefit derived from these activities are

important to rural British Columbians. This bill is important to many, many people in my riding and, in particular, to the members of the rod and gun club in Merritt who have voiced very loudly and clearly to me that they are very much in support of this bill.

These members — like many other men and women, young and old, throughout British Columbia — have a sincere interest and, I could almost say, a passion for the conservation and management of fish and wildlife in the great outdoors of our province. People throughout this province who enjoy fishing and hunting — and they do live in both urban and rural B.C., I might add — make a significant contribution both in their volunteer time and their money towards fish and wildlife conservation.

I am pleased to say that this bill recognizes these important contributions, and it recognizes the importance of fishing and hunting to the people and communities of British Columbia. It's for these reasons that this bill that ensures the right to hunt and fish is certainly worthy of support.

B. Suffredine: I rise to speak in support of this bill after being contacted by many of my constituents even before this was tendered in the House. They're very fearful of the assurance they'll get to continue to hunt and fish and have access to Crown land for that purpose.

Both hunting and fishing are absolutely dependent on conservation. Although I haven't hunted since I was about 21, I did enjoy it back then. It was an outdoor activity that gives one a great appreciation of the outdoors.

As a teenager I was active in the local gun club run by the police department in Regina, and I gained great proficiency just at shooting. I had a target average of 99. Shooting, like any other activity, is a skill. There's a certain amount of pride in just achieving a level of proficiency at it, even if you don't do something specific with it.

[1120]

Although I don't hunt anymore, I do go fishing sometimes with less success than other days. Fishing is an activity, like hunting, where you get to enjoy the outdoors. You get the friendship and the company of others. Typically, where I live I fish in Kootenay Lake for the Kootenay Lake rainbow. The Gerrard rainbow trout is a prized fish around the world, but they're a little more fussy than the fish mentioned last week by the member for North Coast, who suggested that when you fish off the north coast, you don't need very much skill in order to be assured you'd catch a fish.

There's a real skill to catching a Kootenay Lake rainbow. You have to select colours carefully, and how you tie the fly can actually make a difference in whether or not you get a bite. There are a certain amount of stories that go around depending on what you do and how you fish. Sometimes you catch fish, and sometimes you release what you catch. Sometimes you keep it.

Last weekend there was a fishing derby in the Nelson area put on by the Nelson city police. That derby is all about conservation. They set minimum size limits before you can even weigh a fish in, so people don't keep fish that aren't worthy of the derby.

I entered the derby and was actually able to persuade one of the other members to join me. We did what's fondly called a long-line release of two fish. That means the fish bit, simply took our hook and left. But it was still a worthy day. We got to see a fish far away flopping in the water.

I congratulate the Nelson city police for a very conservation-oriented derby. All the money generated by that derby goes to help fund the spawning channel at Kokanee park and the interpretative centre there. The event was all about fellowship and conservation and typifies the sport.

I have been pleased to participate, as well, with our local rod and gun club. There are semi-annual meetings between the rod and gun club people and the conservation officers when they go to set quotas for the harvest of animals like white-tailed deer or elk. The conservation officers consult with local rod and gun club executives to determine what the population data is for almost every species. They talk about elk, white-tailed deer, mule deer, cougars and bears. Many people that don't hunt cougars and bears and animals of that nature still see them and are able to give pretty valuable data to the conservation officers about trying to balance those populations.

There are some people who think if we stopped all hunting, that would conserve the species, and they couldn't be more wrong. What that would invite is wild fluctuations in populations. The reality is that man lives here, and man interferes with the populations that are there in nature. If we don't manage them, there will indeed be wild ups and downs in the swings of various populations.

I received a couple of letters from constituents of mine who support Mr. Bennett, as well, and wrote him a letter but kindly gave me a copy. The first is from Richard Green of Nelson. He says:

"Thank you for your recent statements in the Legislature. It's encouraging to know that at least one of our elected politicians is ready, willing and able to acknowledge that fishing and hunting have been and remain an important part of our heritage. It is to be hoped that legislation testifying to that effect will be presented, debated and passed in the B.C. Legislature during the term of this government.

"For various reasons, the total number of B.C. hunters has been declining in recent years. It needs to be accepted that hunting is an important management tool available to our wildlife managers. Further, fishers and hunters have cheerfully contributed both money and time in the cause of conservation, and they will continue to do so.

"Both fishing and hunting are under attack from several quarters. Certainly the trend toward urban lifestyle is partly responsible. Ideological and unscientific campaigning by animal rights groups is another factor. Declining numbers of species due to the loss of some of their habitat also enter into the picture. Faulty decisions

for political gain have been made from time to time. The grizzly bear hunting moratorium comes to mind.

"Please continue to speak up for fishing and hunting in this bountiful province, and thank you for doing so.

"Sincerely,
Richard Green"

[1125]

Another one, from Steve Arnt:

"Dear Mr. Bennett:

"Thank you for your efforts toward a hunting and fishing heritage declaration. I feel these are a very important part of our not-that-distant history in this province and an especially important part of our heritage. They give us a deep connection to the land that we would not otherwise have. They also provide a non-taxed source of revenue to help pay for environmental programs.

"I wish you success in your endeavour and hope the other Liberal MLAs will support you.

"Sincerely,
Steve Arnt"

I can say to both Steve and Richard that I support the comments made by my constituents and this bill. I congratulate the member for East Kootenay for initiating a declaration for this very basic and essential right.

M. Hunter: I am pleased to rise this morning to speak to Bill M204, The Hunting and Fishing Heritage Act, introduced by my colleague the member for East Kootenay. In looking at the bill and thinking about what this bill attempts to do, I separated my analysis into two separate thought lines. One was, first of all, the legal nature of the bill, what this bill does to our legal rights as citizens in the area of fishing and hunting; and secondly, some practical aspects the bill raises in my mind.

First of all, let me talk about the legal aspects of this bill as I see them. I think the origins of this bill come from what I think is a perceived erosion of the rights and access that citizens of Canada have experienced over the last ten years. I should stress that I am talking from a fishing point of view. Those that know me know my background in fisheries. It is one that is completely unrelated to the kind of fish tales we've heard from, for example, the member for Prince George North. I don't profess any skill in fishing. I profess even less skill in hunting, which is a subject I know very little about, but I do know from a legal point of view that some of the same concerns are expressed by the hunting community — that their rights of access to the resource they have depended on for recreation and, in some cases, sustenance are being eroded as time goes by.

In the area of fishing, I've spoken in this House before about the impacts of the federal government's aboriginal fishing strategy, so-called AFS, a strategy or policy that was introduced in 1992. That policy and actions that have surrounded it... You have to excuse me. I got up from my deathbed to make this intervention this morning, so if I have to pause, I'm sure you will understand. The AFS and federal actions surrounding that policy have, I think, heightened the con-

cerns of both recreational and commercial fishermen and fisherwomen in this province.

My own background, as I've referred to, is in the commercial fisheries. I worked for 15 years as president of the Fisheries Council of B.C. and before that as a civil servant of Canada responsible for a number of international ventures. My background is in commercial fisheries, but I believe the issues that are being addressed by this bill are also relevant in the recreational fishing sector. I stand here today as a proud member of the Nanaimo Fish and Game Protective Association, which I joined when I moved to Nanaimo to give my personal support to that association and to the B.C. Wildlife Federation, which does so much for conservation in this province.

Getting back to the legal issues this bill affects and addresses, I think we have to go back a long, long time. A person has the right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law is what the substantive part of this bill says. So we have to ask: well, what is the law? Well, the law requires us to go back almost 800 years to the year 1215 at Runnymede, a place just outside of modern-day London, where the king of the day, King John, signed the document known as the Magna Carta. That document, which has fortunately been transliterated from the original into words we can read and understand quite readily, is one of the most significant documents in our constitutional history.

[1130]

Our constitutional history, as you know, is based on the constitutional history of Great Britain. The Magna Carta forms part of English common law, and our own common law here in Canada is a derivative of English common law. What does Canadian constitutional and common law say about fisheries? Well, it says in the British North America Act that the responsibility for seacoast and fisheries is a responsibility of the Dominion of Canada, the federal government, but as time has gone by over the 130 years or so since British Columbia joined the Canadian Confederation, there have been a series of delegations of powers from Ottawa, and that includes delegation of authority to British Columbia in non-tidal waters.

The fact is that despite that delegation of power which has occurred also in other provinces, notably Ontario and Quebec, despite that delegation of authority to the provinces, the provisions of the Magna Carta, the common-law provisions which originally gave and guaranteed the right to ordinary citizens to fish in tidal waters, which is still a Canadian responsibility including fresh water.... That right was guaranteed by the Magna Carta. It is a right in the British common law; it is a right under Canadian common law.

My constituents, like many other members in this chamber, have indicated to me that they feel this right is being eroded. Why do we feel that is the case other than the obvious displacement of commercial fisheries and some recreational fisheries as a result of the federal government's aboriginal fishing strategy?

Well, I think that one of the factors that's at play here is that because of the Magna Carta, in a sense, fish

have no legal persona. Fish are not owned by you or me. They are not owned by the government of Canada under our common law, but the government of Canada has a responsibility to manage on behalf of all Canadians. So, peculiar though it may seem in this era where provincial control of resources seems to be very much in people's minds with respect to events like the Kyoto protocol, in fish we have a different circumstance.

Our farthest brother living in most distant Newfoundland or in the Arctic has every bit as much right to catch a salmon in British Columbia, provided he or she has a licence, as do you or I who live right next to the resource. That's what the public ownership of fish by Canada and the public responsibility to manage fish is all about in this country. It is a public ownership, access to which is controlled by a system of licensing. Fishing licences, both commercial and recreational, are issued by the Crown, either federal or provincial, depending on what the delegation authority has been.

It's my belief in terms of, again, what the law of fisheries is that those licences issued by Her Majesty in right of Canada or in right of British Columbia, in our case, represent a tenure. The licence is a well-enforced and well-documented means of managing this public ownership and public trust responsibility that governments have. That has been established by the Supreme Court of Canada. No one owns these fish, but when we buy a licence, we each have a little portion of tenure to live by the management system that's in place, and that is our right. That piece of paper represents our little piece of the right to fish.

We are suffering from a problem where people who go buy that licence, be they commercial fishermen with very large cash investments in a food business or be they people who have spoken in this House who claim to know how to catch fish recreationally.... Each of us has a little piece of the pie, and it is that little piece of the pie that we feel individually, one by one, and then collectively is being eroded.

Yet that tenure, which exists in that licence, is a piece of property. It is a piece of property, and I submit that the constitutional responsibility for property rights, which is clearly held by the provinces in our country.... The province of British Columbia has a right and a responsibility to uphold those civil and property rights represented by that tenure of that licence, which is our ticket to access to the rights of the common law that go back to Magna Carta.

[1135]

From a legal perspective I believe the bill, which talks about a person having the right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law, is very appropriate in today's circumstances, where the legal rights that exist cannot be taken away by government. The government doesn't own the fish. It can only manage and allocate access to the resource. Those rights are being very much questioned by people who actually own the licences. I think this bill makes it very clear that in British Columbia, we take our responsibilities to the legal requirement to uphold that property right very seriously.

I want to move on to the practical issues that have a little bit to do with what I've just said, but in some cases go a little bit more into the issues of management of the resource. The corollary of public ownership of the resource is, of course, what comes with that ownership — a responsibility to manage. It's that responsibility that is the other side of the coin of the public right that King John gave us all in 1215. We have a responsibility to ourselves and to those who follow us to manage the resources very carefully. I'm going to again focus on fisheries resources, because that's what I know something about. The fisheries resources in this province — despite all you might have read about how we've managed to catch the last salmon, not true, and that other resources are in decline, partially true — depend on where you are and what species you're talking about. At the end of the day, the commercial and recreational fisheries together probably produce in the order of \$2 billion worth of value for British Columbians in the course of each and every year.

Just this past summer alone, the value of sockeye salmon that were returning to the Fraser River, which were left in the water as a result of management decisions made by Canada, is estimated by those in the seafood business to have amounted to about \$40 million — \$40 million of revenues to British Columbia that were not achieved because of questionable management decisions made by Canada.

That responsibility to manage the impacts of that responsibility are very, very important for a very large number of people in coastal British Columbia as well as people in the interior of non-aboriginal and aboriginal descent, who see the value of fisheries for tourism and for food all throughout this province. Yet despite that responsibility to manage, the public resources being applied to management are diminishing.

The ability of Canada and the provinces to fund what is necessary and to provide for adequate resource management is declining. The federal government cut-backs in the mid-1990s certainly had serious impacts on the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

The province, as we know, is in the middle of some changes in the way we allocate resources that I think will have an impact, which we need to work with our fish and game clubs to overcome. Those fish and game clubs, one of which I am a member — the Nanaimo club — and the B.C. Wildlife Federation represent a huge management resource in this province. There are something like 40,000 members of the B.C. Wildlife Federation. Those people are the eyes and ears of resource management in this province. They are the people who are responsible stewards of the resource, who work in cooperation with private landowners, with the Crown, with various agencies of the Crown, to help to conserve, manage and enforce. Those people are the very people who are being affected by this diminution in the seriousness with which governments are taking their management responsibilities. These are the people — along with their commercial fishing cousins, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike — who are suffering because resource management is not being taken

seriously and because legal rights that we have held for 800 years, I think, are being taken less seriously than they should be.

[1140]

I think this bill will serve to reinforce the commitment that this government is making towards the conservation and management of natural resources. It will reinforce the commitment of anglers, commercial fishermen and, I am assuming, people who hunt, and it will give them fresh hope that we are serious about conserving the right to hunt and fish in this province.

Certainly, like other members, I have received numbers of letters from my constituents who are supportive of this piece of legislation. I want to read into the record a few phrases from some of these letters. This is from a gentleman on Cathers View Place in Nanaimo.

"Dear Sir:

"I want to tell you that I support your efforts to have this private member's bill, the right to hunt and fish act, enacted, and the sooner the better."

This is a copy that I received of a letter to the member for East Kootenay.

"Dear Mr. Bennett:

"On behalf of the 4,000 members of 20 fish and game clubs of the Vancouver Island region of the B.C. Wildlife Federation I wish to voice our appreciation of your proposal regarding a fishing and hunting heritage declaration. It is encouraging that you recognize the importance of these outdoor recreational opportunities that so many British Columbians enjoy. Our membership and many other non-B.C. Wildlife Federation-affiliated groups work very hard year after year, putting effort and dollars into fish and wildlife programs of education, research and enhancement. We consider your initiative as being recognition of these efforts and your success upon completion as somewhat of a reward."

This bill, in the minds of constituents of mine who are working as private citizens — many of them on a volunteer basis — to help conserve, preserve and enhance the fisheries and wildlife resources of this province and my many friends in the commercial fishing industry who work very carefully and rigorously to conserve the fish for next year's harvest and the next decade's harvest... I want to stand and support this bill. It reasserts the rights that are inherent in our common law. It does not replace those rights. It does not change the common law, as some people have argued outside this chamber. It doesn't replace or change the common law that we have inherited from that field in Runnymede in 1215. In fact, what this bill does is guarantee those rights within the law in this province, and on that basis, I am very pleased to offer my support for this bill.

R. Visser: I, too, want to thank the member for presenting this bill and for giving us all the opportunity to speak about something that is part of all of our daily lives, for the most part, for those of us who live in the more rural parts of British Columbia.

I live in Campbell River, which is, of course, the salmon capital of the world. Much to the chagrin of the member from Port Alberni, it is indeed the salmon

capital of the world. Hunting and fishing has a long and storied tradition up my way, and I wanted to spend time talking about those things today and what this bill means to many of the folks I represent.

You know, autumn is an interesting time up my way. I've found it most interesting since I've been elected to the Legislature that I find it hard to find people to meet with because, I think, they've all gone moose hunting up in...

P. Bell: Prince George.

R. Visser: ...Prince George or Fort St. James or other places. It's quite interesting when you drive around the community. You go to see some of your old friends, and you go: "Where's Joe? Where's Phil? Where's Jim?" "Oh, they're hunting."

It's been a bit of a slow time for me in meetings, because everybody has gone off to seek the elusive northern moose. Of course, we don't have moose on Vancouver Island, so we all have to get in the truck and camper and drive away.

You know, I think it's one of those things that we probably make a little jest about. I know I haven't seen my father for three weeks, because he's up there trying to find a moose too. I'm not sure what he's going to do with it when he finds it, but he's looking for one very earnestly — he and his friends. It's something that becomes part of the ritual.

[1145]

When I was young, we would spend the fall out hunting. Now I have two dogs, and the two dogs and I live right out in the middle of the country. We head off and look for grouse for dinner. It's part of that thing that becomes what you do. I grew up with it. It isn't something you think about. You think about it in the sense that, yes, it's time, and I'm going to go. I enjoy it and feel strongly about.

When you arrive here, you start to think that maybe a bill like this is something that's important. Maybe it's important to make a statement about something you take for granted. Maybe it's important that we as the elected people talk or think about enacting a motion that enshrines our rights to those kinds of activities. I appreciate the member's efforts on behalf of all of us. These are important things, things we take for granted.

I want to speak to the second "whereas" as well, as has been spoken to earlier: "WHEREAS hunters and anglers contribute to the understanding, conservation, and management of fish and wildlife in British Columbia." I couldn't agree more.

I'm going to tell you all a couple of stories about my summer. This was the summer, my thirty-seventh summer on this planet, that I made it in to the storied Campbell River Tyee Club and the Tyee Club of British Columbia.

That's where, in a feat of daring and sharp angling, you have to sit in a rowboat and catch a salmon over 30 pounds — and I have a witness from Chilliwack who was alongside me that morning — on a 20-pound test line, using an artificial lure. That's from a rowboat and

without assistance from anyone — no guides. The guide rows the boat, and you fish the fish.

The club started, I think, in about the mid-1920s, and it has become one of those pieces of angling lore from around the world. It is something where people travel from all over the world to try to make it into the Tyee Club of British Columbia. It has its own special area at the mouth of the Campbell River, and they have been fishing from these rowboats for all this time.

I had occasion on Wednesday to visit a fellow named Hilford Burton, who in his retirement is resurrecting the art of constructing what are called Painter rowboats. They are clinker-built rowboats built by old Mr. Painter years ago in the famous Painter's Lodge, and that's how they fished. People came from all over the world to Painter's Lodge to fish, as they do now, and they head to the Tyee Club to try to make it in. It's a remarkable thing. You know, I wore the pin. I didn't have it today, unfortunately, but I wore the pin of the Tyee Club. Everybody sort of chuckled when I came in with it, but I'll tell you, for a kid who grew up in Campbell River and for somebody who likes fishing, it's an important and interesting thing to do.

It's neat. You go to the clubhouse, and you register. You see the photos on the wall. You see the 72-pound tyee up on the wall. You become part of the book, you know, of the collective history of our community. It's a neat, neat thing, and I am very supportive.

How does that connect to this bill? Well, let me tell you, there's a number. One of the functions the Tyee Club has is conservation. This is conservation fishing. It's hard to catch them on artificial lures. First of all, it's hard to find an old wooden shovel-nosed plug that has the exact colours that will catch fish. The guides and the people that row value them immeasurably. I found one that my grandfather had, and I keep it on my desk. Every time somebody comes in who's a tyee fishermen, they say: "Oh, what are you going to do with that? I was wondering.... Oh, I'd like that." I keep it on my desk as a reminder that someday I'd like to catch a tyee on it.

[1150]

These guys care about fishing. They approach it in an interesting way. They approach it in a conservation way. They're all involved in the management of the Campbell River itself. They're all involved in the restoration of that fishery. They all participate in things like gravel committees and in the habitat enhancement. They all raise funds through things like the Pacific Salmon Foundation, etc.

They take ownership of what it is they do. They take ownership of that fishery, those fish and that habitat. They create something that I think is very special. I think that's what we're trying to get to in this bill — that those kinds of things need to be understood in the broader context of governance and the broader context of the people of this province.

A lot of the sensibilities in my community that come around the thoughts towards hunting and fishing.... Certainly, the Tyee Club and some of the other angling clubs and the vast number of people that par-

ticipate on the north end of Vancouver Island, whether you live in Nootka or Gold River and fish in Nootka Sound for some of the Canoona River fish or whether you live farther north in Kyuquot or farther north than that, in Quatsino or Port Hardy.... In Quatsino it's the Marble River fish that the people up there have been tremendously active on over the years in a locally funded and volunteer-based organization that has put thousands of big salmon back into the rivers so that they return and produce an amazing sport fishery up there.

It's speaking to these people and valuing what they do day in and day out that's important. I like that. Part of what happened for the north end of Vancouver Island.... Campbell River was home to the famous Roderick Haig-Brown, whom some people call one of the finest writers in the English language about angling. He has been described in some of the texts as a logger, trapper, guide, magistrate, army officer, radio broadcaster, conservationist, university chancellor. He was a very interesting man and continues to be, even though he passed on in 1976, a powerful and thoughtful presence in Campbell River through the Haig-Brown House and the activities that go on there in his riding.

I have a collection of his books, and I took out *Measure of the Year* and reread it. It is one of those ones that.... He chronicles his life. The farm that he lived on, which was right on the Campbell River, was called Above Tide, and he chronicles some of his early days there in going through the seasons and his connection to the land, his connection to hunting, his connection to the river and fishing.

All of his books, whether it's the fisherman's series — *Fisherman's Fall*, *Fisherman's Winter*, spring or summer — or ones like *A River Never Sleeps*, are some of the finest writing about angling and the connection to the land and conservation and other things that exists in our language. He was a remarkable man, and he has shaped how many of us think about the landscape, about our connection to the environment and how we interact in it and how important it is that we respect the land base as we undertake some of the activities that we do out there, whether they're hunting or fishing or other types of recreation.

Those are some of the reasons why I think this type of bill is important. It pays tribute to people like Roderick Haig-Brown. It pays tribute to organizations like the Tyee Club of British Columbia in Campbell River. It pays tribute to the rod and gun clubs in my area. It pays tribute to the people that volunteer their time in the hatcheries up and down the coast. It pays tribute to a lifestyle. It pays tribute to something that we live out there and that many British Columbians live everywhere — and hold to be important, hold to be meaningful.

[1155]

It pays tribute to something that people like me often take for granted. We assume that we will just go and do these activities. I assume that I'll be able to go and find a grouse or a salmon. I think that as we move forward and build relationships with the land that are

new and interesting, these types of motions, these types of bills, are important. They're meaningful. They provide context within which we can go forward and do our work, and they pay tribute to a lot of folks who care deeply about this province and the land it occupies.

Noting the time, I move adjournment of the debate.

R. Visser moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Halsey-Brandt moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

The House adjourned at 11:56 a.m.