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3RD SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2002

The House met at 10:05 a.m.

Prayers.

Private Members' Statements

LOOKING AT NEW MODELS FOR SUPPORTIVE LIVING IN B.C.

P. Sahota: I see health care as a big jigsaw puzzle in which acute care is one small corner. I prefer to call it illness care. If governments could nurture the other parts of the puzzle, the problem of ever-increasing spiralling of costs for illness care would improve. This statement was expressed to our health committee by a community health nurse in Terrace, and I believe this nurse's concerns are valid. We know the acute care system needs to be there when we need it, but we also need to make sure that as the population grows older, British Columbians have access not only to highly specialized services but also to other parts of the puzzle, such as assisted or supportive living, residential care and home care.

British Columbia is home to 240,000 people 75 years old and older, and this number is projected to rise by to 408,000 by 2021. As seniors age, they are more likely to experience disabilities, be they physical or cognitive impairments of some sort. At times, all they may require is an appropriate type of facility, like assisted living, and not hospitalization. However, we know that at times seniors occupy beds in acute care hospitals, and really they should be in some sort of assisted or supportive-living environment. The cost for a hospital bed is more than \$1,100 a day, and I know the cost is substantially lower if the patient's needs were met outside of the acute care model.

Supportive-housing units can be operated on a subsidized basis for \$50 to \$75 per unit, per day. We need to make other supportive-living options available. I know the government has clearly recognized this and is trying to find options outside of their traditional institutional settings. As this is carried out, it has to be done in a seamless way and an integrated way.

The health care budget consumes up to 41 percent of the provincial budget, over \$10 billion, and we know that every province in Canada is trying to find answers and solutions to the complex challenges we're facing in our health care system. Issues such as new technologies, new procedures and new pharmaceuticals add new costs to our health care system, especially to the acute care side, because we know most of our health care system is driven by hospitals and the providers within those settings. Again, we need to look at the whole puzzle and decide how we keep our elderly out of the acute care side but also offer them an environment that meets their needs as they grow old. I know this government is spending a lot of time looking at

what the issues are in terms of access to continuing care.

One of the issues that has been defined is that the continuing care of our health sector is currently not covered in the Canada Health Act. The Canada Health Act covers hospital and physician services but not services such as nursing homes, long-term residential care and home care. However, we also know that the provinces have recognized that supportive, assisted long-term and intermediate care is a fundamentally important part of our health care sector. As Dr. Ballem, the Deputy Minister of Health Services said: "If you don't make public investments into this area, then you really end up using resources in our acute care area, in particular, which are covered with universal access. You end up using those inappropriately."

I know the government is trying to create more options and is exploring innovative ways so our seniors can have healthy environments to age in. We campaigned on a commitment to ensure that we build and operate 5,000 intermediate and long-term care units by 2006. Part of this is to develop 3,500 supportive-living units throughout British Columbia over the next four years for seniors and people with disabilities who have low or modest income.

My constituency of Burnaby-Edmonds is home to 1,563 seniors who live in care units. Burnaby-Edmonds is home to many continuing care facilities like the Normanna Rest Home, George Derby Centre and New Vista Care Home, which is a 236-bed intermediate care facility. It is also Burnaby's oldest non-profit agency, providing low-cost or government subsidized housing to about 600 seniors. Last year the New Vista Society officially opened its \$5 million Margaret Bacchus Manor, a 39-suite development. B.C. Housing provided the society with an annual operating subsidy of \$187,000 and is also providing interim construction financing of \$2.6 million.

[1010]

A couple of months ago I attended the opening of a new supportive-living facility in my constituency, called the Nikkei Home. I saw firsthand how happy the seniors and their families were with this new model of care. The 59-unit Nikkei Home complex is the first subsidized non-profit supportive-living development in the lower mainland. Under supportive living, seniors will receive supportive services such as meals, house-keeping, laundry, recreational activities, 24-hour emergency response and personal care services. Furthermore, this new model will improve seniors' quality of life by allowing them to live more independently.

This facility was made possible because the provincial government worked with the federal government, Fraser health authority and the Nikkei centre to form a partnership that works for all. These types of partnerships will enable British Columbians to care for our seniors the way they want and deserve. We have to continue to be progressive in our thinking, persistently looking for and bringing forward new ideas. Models

such as the Nikkei Home are about independent housing for our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors I have spoken to want to keep their independence. They want to be able to live in their own home where they have the freedom and privacy that they have always enjoyed. Supportive living provides a better quality of life for frail seniors as they age in their community. Our housing options must meet these needs and give our seniors peace of mind so they will be able to continue living their lives the way they want with the assistance they require.

Hon. K. Whittred: I would like to say how welcome the member's remarks are this morning. It is indeed very appropriate that we speak at this time about complexes such as the Nikkei complex in Burnaby. I had the pleasure a few weeks ago, along with the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services and the Premier, to participate in the opening of the Nikkei Home. It is indeed a model, I think, of what we are going to achieve over the next few years in this province. It is a complex that features independent living, great suites for the people who live there. It is purpose-built to serve the individuals who are going to live in those suites.

I was very interested that the society that designed the complex had in fact worked very hard to have everything made a little bit lower. They recognized that as we age, we also tend to shrink. I thought that was a very nice touch. It indicates how the non-profit associations can tailor their projects to meet the needs of the individuals that they are in fact going to serve.

I was also very taken with the entertainment that was given us on that morning. The residents of the home, in fact, had a choir that they entertained us with. One of the first things that I think anyone would have noticed was the age of the individuals, of course, which was quite elderly. Yet they entertained us with great vigour. This is in fact a wonderful example of how the social needs and the need for social involvement and stimulation are being met in this kind of purpose-built complex.

As we have set about to try to redesign a system that was really built for the 1970s, we have found that the values that seniors want are, in fact, independence.... They value their independence very much and want to continue to have the independence of their own home, their own address, a door that locks, a place where they can entertain their grandchildren. They also need supports as required. Many elderly people can no longer do their own vacuuming. They need some help with meals. That is what this kind of assisted living provides.

[1015]

From a government point of view, Mr. Speaker, we have put in place a policy framework that will allow the development of supportive-living and assisted-living units to go ahead. We have before the House right now legislation that is designed to put in place the regulatory framework that will ensure that residents who live in assisted-living complexes will, in

fact, be safe and secure. In that, I'm very pleased to say that we are a leader in the western world. We have also put in transition guidelines to ensure that patients and the people who are going to live in these facilities have the kinds of supports they need and that they have the appropriate care and the continuity they require. Further, we are working to ensure that assisted living will be a choice on the continuum of care for our seniors and persons with disabilities, which is in fact affordable for people on low and modest incomes.

I mentioned a few minutes ago that we are dealing with a home and community care system that really has not changed in 30 years. We are faced with many, many old buildings that are no longer adequate to meet the needs of today's technology. They no longer meet the needs of today's expectations. We have to renew as we rebuild the system.

I would like to conclude by just telling a couple of stories about some of the facilities I have visited recently. I was in Prince George and visited a young disabled man, and he is living very nicely in his assisted-living unit. He had lived several years in an extended care unit, where he was amongst many, many very elderly people. In Terrace I met a woman who had just recently moved into her new suite, and she was loving every minute of it.

P. Sahota: "Safe, affordable housing for seniors is something we all support. Many seniors have a tough time already with health and financial worries. Affordable housing helps ensure that seniors can continue to afford to live in their communities, and it builds strong and inclusive communities." That statement was spoken by my predecessor, Fred Randall, who passed away earlier this year. Fred not only supported projects such as the Nikkei centre, the Margaret Bacchus project at the New Vista Society, but he worked very hard on behalf of seniors in Burnaby.

At a recent dinner at New Vista, Fred's wife, Aileen, and his family were honoured by the New Vista Society for Fred's contribution and commitment to helping build a strong community. We need to continue building our communities. I appreciate the comments made by the minister this morning that will allow us to build stronger communities for our seniors. As the minister said, British Columbia is a leader in building the model of supportive, assisted-living homes most desired by our aging population.

We know that currently many British Columbians are admitted into residential care or hospitalized simply because a more appropriate alternative is unavailable. We know it is important to build more spaces, but they also have to be the right kinds of spaces. We want to better meet the needs of the elderly in our communities. The seniors I spoke to at the New Vista dinner and the many others I've met at the Edmonds seniors centre and the George Derby Centre want to be active participants for as long as possible.

Our seniors have given us so much, and because of them we have the communities we live in. It is our responsibility to ensure that they are treated with care

and respect, because they deserve nothing less from the society that they helped build.

DRUG AWARENESS WEEK

B. Locke: This week is National Addictions Awareness Week. I rise in the House today to bring attention to the devastating impact drug use can have on individuals, families, workplaces and neighbourhoods. We often hear about Vancouver's downtown east side, but drug abuse and addiction crosses all of society's boundaries and can touch anyone — a son, a daughter, a parent, a friend, a sibling — in communities all across this province.

[1020]

The facts are irrefutable. Illicit drugs have a serious and costly effect on our communities. They corrupt our society's human resource potential and are the basis for most criminal activity. Most people are aware of the relationship between drugs, organized crime and violence. The average heavy drug user requires more than \$40,000 a year to support his or her habit. Addicts can't hold down a job, so they often resort to stealing. Stolen property generally sells for only 20 percent of its original cost. This means an individual must steal over \$200,000 worth of goods to support their habit.

Crime associated with drugs is a severe problem, and the law must continue to be enforced to protect the victims. However, I think we would all agree that more needs to be done to find and prosecute the real criminals: those bringing the drugs to the streets and preying on some of the most vulnerable in our society.

StatsCan shows that B.C. has often reported the highest rate of drug offences in Canada. Sometimes we are twice the national average. In addition, B.C.'s annual per-capita drug-related costs are higher than those of any other province.

Too often, though, we jump to conclusions or judge those using drugs. There's another side to drugs: addiction. Addiction is not voluntary. It is an illness of the brain, just like diabetes is an illness of the pancreas. It's a medical problem with huge social impacts. While we need to be diligent with enforcement, we must also take steps to minimize the devastating, harmful and costly impact of drugs. Right now taxpayers spend more than \$4 on enforcement for every \$1 on the health response in dealing with illegal drugs.

I would like to share a personal story that has touched me. It's about a young lad who grew up in what most of us would describe as opulence. He had two parents that loved him, and on the surface it appeared to be a *Leave it to Beaver* household. Behind closed doors there was a very troubled family, with the mother abusing prescription drugs. This dysfunctional family, the demands of absolute perfection from his father and his own personal struggles with his sexuality were more than this 16-year-old could face. He ran away from home and headed for the mean streets of Vancouver.

Within days he was hooked on cocaine. He became another addict on the downtown east side, stealing credit cards to survive, living with prostitutes, eating when something became available — but mostly noth-

ing at all — living in a rat-infested hovel or a cardboard dumpster and watching while acquaintance after acquaintance died. Lots of people knew this family — in fact, some people in this very chamber — and it was common for him to be in the company of community and business leaders, but no one noticed the signs.

Five years later, near death from weight loss, illness, infection and addiction, he called home for help. He was one of the lucky ones. The family could afford to help him immediately. He is now a significant contributor to society and has given back tenfold. He has made it his life's mission to help those people who are in the desperate struggle of addiction and despair.

This story should give us hope, but so much more needs to be done. Current medical best practices suggest we need more addiction services and greater implementation of harm-reduction services — services that range from providing shelter and hot meals to needle exchanges and safe injection sites. Some of the strategies are there to stop or control addiction and others to focus on preventing other medical problems attributed to the abuse of drugs, like HIV and hep C, as these illnesses add an even greater cost burden to our health system, but these are not without controversy.

[1025]

There are approximately 16,000 to 20,000 injection drug users in British Columbia. These people come from all backgrounds, ethnicities and socioeconomic levels. Almost all injection drug users are infected with hep C. Approximately six million needles are given out annually in B.C. — 3.5 million in the Vancouver coastal health authority alone. By having these programs in place in Vancouver, the number of new HIV infections has decreased considerably, and the rate of death from illicit drug overdose and the rate of property crime have also decreased.

In my own community of Surrey we have been wrestling with a number of drug issues, including prevention, treatment, enforcement and harm reduction. As a community we must continue to work hard to ensure that neighbourhoods remain safe and that the medical needs of people with addictions are met. It's certainly no easy feat. But knowing that drug addiction is an illness, and therefore a health care issue, can guide us in developing that right approach.

I look forward to the comments of the Minister of Health.

Hon. C. Hansen: I would like to start by thanking the member for Surrey-Green Timbers for her words on this very important issue. I'd also like to thank the work that's been done by my colleague the Minister of State for Mental Health. He was not available this morning to speak in reply to the member, but he asked me to say a few words in his place.

As the member opposite stated, this week is Drug Awareness Week, and clearly illegal drugs affect many of us in our communities. For some individuals and families the costs are absolutely enormous.

As the member indicated in her remarks, the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse indicates that gov-

ernments across Canada spend four times more on enforcement than on health treatment. That translates into about \$400 million across Canada on enforcement, compared to about \$88 million on treatment and other health responses.

The member for Surrey-Green Timbers has given us a number of statistics about the harmful effects of illegal drugs in our communities. She also stated a clear policy of this government, and that is that addiction is an illness and that it needs to be treated as such.

It was a little over 18 months ago that we were sworn in as a government, and the Premier put at the cabinet table a cabinet member responsible for mental health programs. That indeed was the first time in any Commonwealth country that there has been a minister named with specific responsibility for mental health issues. Early on in his work it became very clear that we could not separate mental health from addiction issues. To have one person looking at one issue independent of the other would not be productive and certainly would not meet the needs of the individual British Columbians who are facing these challenges. As a result, on April 1 of this year the Premier asked the Minister of State for Mental Health to take on responsibility for overseeing addiction services in this province as well.

I have stated that we had two separate systems serving patients up until now: the addiction system and the mental health system. Yet 50 to 70 percent of those who have addiction issues also have mental illnesses. An equal percentage of those who face mental health challenges also have addiction issues to complicate that. Too often the system did not work in a way that it was supposed to. Frequently the system was more exclusive than inclusive when it came to making sure that someone was treated. If someone had a mental illness, and they also had a concurrent addiction diagnosis and tried to seek treatment for that mental illness, too often they would be denied access to a program or service due to their addiction. For example, they could not get mental health housing if they had a concurrent addiction problem. Similarly, a detox facility wouldn't take them because of the concurrent mental health challenges that they were facing. This left a huge portion of clients and individual British Columbians who were not able to get proper treatment in either system to access the services that they needed.

It is important to note that when we are treating a patient who has concurrent diagnoses, the method of treatment will depend on the type of mental illness. Having the two systems separated meant that treatment was not always effective, and the two systems may be treating the same patient independently of each other, sometimes resulting in duplication or poor use of the resources that would be available. This was why the government realized that we had to align mental health and addictions. Now we have both systems working together, sharing resources and better meeting the needs of those individual British Columbians.

It should not be underestimated how huge this step is. It improves treatment and ensures resources are

used in the best way possible. Ontario did this four years ago, and it should have happened in this province at that time as well.

[1030]

Under the direction of the Minister of State for Mental Health, we are implementing a progressive strategy that does put patients first. For the first time in B.C. we have integrated addiction services into the health care system. As of April 1 of this year, the health authorities throughout the province are delivering addiction services in an integrated way with those other services. This means that these programs and services will be more responsive to the regional needs throughout the province. They will not be micromanaged out of Victoria.

The ministry is also developing an addictions framework to help the health authorities in their work. This will include a vision for mental health and addictions in B.C. and provincial best practices for addiction prevention and treatment services. The addictions framework will build on existing provincial and federal best practices throughout the province.

Clearly, this government needs to continue on our work in this important area, and we need to ensure that these programs are available to the many British Columbians who desperately need the services that are there today and the improved services that will be there tomorrow.

B. Locke: I would like to thank the Minister of Health Services for his comments. I know that the Minister of Health Services has been working very hard in conjunction with the Minister of State for Mental Health to address this complex problem that springs from drug abuse, and I commend the government for moving the responsibility of addiction services to the health authorities, because addiction truly is a health issue.

Addiction issues affect every community, and for the past ten years addiction services have not been given the appropriate support. Now the health authorities, with the guidance of the government's addiction framework, can begin the process of revitalizing and implementing evidence-based addiction services.

While the initiation of substance use may be voluntary, the development of an addiction is not voluntary. Like other chronic illnesses such as diabetes or heart disease, addiction requires a combination of medical counselling and risk-reduction interventions, along with ongoing regular follow-up within the health care system to reduce mortality.

I'd like to leave you with another story. This one is about a young girl who grew up in poverty and at the age of nine was sold as part of her father's poker stakes. You see, her father was an addict. He was addicted to heroin, and he would do whatever it took to feed his addiction. Many men abused this child over the course of her young adolescent life, and to mask the pain, she is now an addict. I saw her just ten days ago. This 25-year-old woman looks like she's 60. Her health continues to deteriorate as she lives on the streets.

Although we may not be able to stop the use of drugs, we can minimize the harmful impacts and costs

associated with the use of drugs. Addiction Awareness Week is an opportunity to look at addictions from a holistic approach to treating addiction based on national and international best practices and to also educate ourselves about what we can do to reduce the impact of drugs in our own communities.

Introductions by Members

Hon. M. Coell: I'd like to introduce to the House today 60 grade 11 students from Parkland, with their teacher Ms. Owen and some family members. I'd also say to them that my executive assistant in my office is a graduate of Parkland. I wish you all well here. Would the House please make them all welcome.

Debate Continued

SUSTAINING RURAL B.C.

D. Chutter: There's a great deal of interest and concern about the sustainability of small rural communities in B.C. The reason for this is that many of these communities throughout the province — whether they are coastal, interior or northern — are economically depressed and losing population numbers.

[1035]

The poor economic activity is largely the result of reduced activity in resource industries such as forestry, mining and fisheries. Certainly, the softwood tariffs have resulted in lower profits or even losses in the forest industry, resulting in reductions or shutdowns in production, of course, and therefore corresponding layoffs of workers.

Excessive taxation, regulations and general anti-business attitudes by the previous government all contributed to a decline in investment in resource industries in rural B.C. Forestry was smothered in pointless red tape, while mining withered away, leaving for other countries. Our rural communities suffered the consequences of fewer jobs and less investment.

The out-migration of individuals and families has numerous effects on a small rural community, including a reduction in tax base that restricts municipal operations and residential sales increases with a corresponding decrease in residential value. Fewer shoppers in town mean lower sales for small businesses, resulting in business closures, more job losses and more migration out — a vicious circle of job losses, people moving out, businesses closing, more job losses and more people moving away. Over the last decade many rural families have watched their life savings invested in their homes shrink as rural communities wither.

Changes in government services have resulted in reduced staff in some rural communities. Even the reduction of only a few jobs in a small community can have a significant impact. With the lower mainland and other urban centres continuing to hum along with full services relatively close to home, small rural community people are frustrated, and they're frustrated because they know the resources in rural B.C. are the

most significant contributors to the provincial economy, benefiting all British Columbians. Yet with depressed rural economies and the loss of jobs and services, small-town B.C. residents perceive that the resource values have been extracted from their region with little returned in long-term benefits to rural communities.

This circumstance gives rise to a perception among rural communities that government is ignoring their plight and just doesn't care, while certainly the evidence of the past decade clearly shows that the previous government did not care about rural B.C., as they continued year after year to implement bad public policy that thrashed resource business and rural communities. I am pleased to say that this government of today knows that rural B.C. is an important part of our province with significant contributions from the resource and tourism sectors. In fact, we realize that approximately 71 percent of the total value of international exports from this province comes from rural B.C. Because of this awareness, this government has introduced many changes and initiatives that will assist rural communities.

Recently this government introduced the Forest and Range Practices Act, a results-based forest practices code that will maintain high environmental standards while reducing costs to industry. This is the first of several policy changes that will be introduced in the near future to retain competitiveness of our forest industry in international markets and benefit rural investment, jobs and communities.

To reinvigorate mining activity, we have amended legislation to reduce regulations and uncertainty for investors. For example, turnaround time in authorization will be shorter. A two-zone system that defines land as either opened or closed will be implemented, and streamlining application reviews, permitting and compliance processes will encourage industry growth.

Health care services in rural communities have received particular attention by this government, with new initiatives that include increasing training to paramedic level 1 for 1,300 rural remote paramedics, establishing telehealth to link remote communities to other centres in order to consult with health professionals and offering forgivable loans to graduating health care professionals who agree to practise in rural B.C.

The Ministry of Education recognizes the challenges in rural education involving declining enrolment, problems with recruiting teachers and difficulties in transporting children to school. This government established a task force on rural education to recommend strategies to ensure our kids in rural and remote communities across B.C. have access to quality education. The Premier's commitment to technology is important for rural education as well. As we increase connectivity, we can better serve students in rural communities, especially in subjects restricted due to numbers of students.

Post-secondary students will also benefit with the recently announced BCcampus, a website that will

provide a single point of on-line access to all public post-secondary distant learning courses, programs and resources. The Ministry of Competition, Science and Enterprise's policy of extending high-speed Internet to 80 percent of the province in this term will be a significant benefit to rural secondary and post-secondary students, allowing them to learn in their hometown and benefiting their community.

[1040]

In addition, this government has provided infrastructure funding to numerous small rural municipalities and is committed to creating regional transportation committees that will establish priorities for rural communities. Let's not forget that perhaps the most significant action taken to date by this government to reinvigorate rural communities is the message we sent out to the rest of the world. With the immediate reduction in personal and business tax, the phase-out of the insidious corporate capital tax, aggressive strategy to reduce regulation and red tape and a government supportive of business, the international business community now knows that British Columbia is open for business as a competitive place to invest.

The initiatives this government has taken to date, with more to come, are the ingredients to returning jobs, economic activity and prosperity to rural B.C. We will continue to encourage rural communities' revitalization, because we know that to have a prosperous society with effective services and a healthy environment, we require a robust economy. It is an economy largely dependent on the hard work of people living in rural communities.

Hon. G. Abbott: It's my pleasure to rise and respond to the very thoughtful statement by my friend and colleague from Yale-Lillooet in respect to some of the challenges and opportunities facing rural British Columbia. Certainly, like the hon. member, I have the honour today of representing a rural constituency in this Legislature. I was also born in the small rural town of Enderby and grew up in the similarly small and rural community of Sicamous, so I think I do have, like the hon. member, some sense of the challenges that face rural communities and rural areas in British Columbia today.

In the case of the Shuswap, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, forests, tourism and agriculture are its mainstays. I know other parts of the province have mining and/or fishing as their mainstays. I think in pretty much all of those areas we are feeling a sense of challenge these days in respect to the sustainability and future of our communities. Part of this, I think, is the large demographic challenge we face in this province and indeed in this nation and, I suspect, in most places around the world. We are, on balance, increasingly an older society, and we are, on balance, becoming a more urban society as well.

One of the consequences of the movement of kids, largely, and often older people from rural communities is that we see, in some cases at least, a depopulation of rural communities and rural areas in the province. My

kids, for example, are not likely to do what I did, which was to take up the family farm. I suspect that they will find employment in Vancouver or some other urban area of the province, and I suspect that my kids are fairly typical of kids across the province as we see this broad movement to urbanization in our communities.

We've got a number of challenges, and I think the member laid them out very well. Certainly from my perspective, the biggest challenge right now is the softwood lumber dispute with the United States. That's a very big issue in communities in the Shuswap. Forestry is now and will be for the foreseeable future the economic mainstay of our communities. As long as there is a lack of resolution with respect to the softwood access dispute with the United States, there's going to be, I think, a cloud hanging over all of our communities. It's really tough for our communities to move forward in the absence of some resolution of that, simply because it's just so overwhelmingly important.

[1045]

I think we are — and again, I give the member credit for pointing this out — trying, as a government, to overcome a decade of policies which I think were very hostile to economic development in rural and other communities in British Columbia. We are trying to overcome a decade of government-induced costs to those communities: excessive taxes, excessive regulations and so on. For example, Bill 74, the Forest and Range Practices Act, as the member pointed out, is one way of trying to reduce some of those government-induced costs and set our industries on a more positive footing, so hopefully we do have those forest jobs, those mining jobs, those fishing jobs, and so on, as we move forward.

Clearly, we have a challenge as a government to continue to work with rural communities to work through what's probably going to be a difficult transition in the years ahead. We need to be thoughtful as we move forward to ensure that we are left with stable, vital communities where people can find jobs, raise their kids and enjoy a high quality of life.

Rural B.C., as the member noted, is a great generator of wealth — 71 percent, as I think he mentioned, of the provincial wealth, of exports, of jobs. All of those are key to healthy, vibrant communities. Economic diversification, I'd submit, is the key to sustainable communities in the future in British Columbia. I think the opportunities for the future are strong in tourism, ski development, resource development, high-tech. All of these are opportunities that I think thoughtful government policies will go a long way to supporting and fostering.

D. Chutter: My thanks to the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services for his comments on what I consider a very important subject. Certainly, we as government are concerned about sustaining rural communities, and since every rural community and region is represented in this Legislature by this government, I feel that rural B.C. will continue to get the attention it requires.

I think it's important and also interesting to point out there are many groups that exist in B.C. that have a special interest in sustaining rural communities. I just want to mention a number of them. The Council of Resource Communities of B.C. is a network of resource communities throughout British Columbia that all depend on natural resources for their economic well-being. This council addresses rural resource issues and makes recommendations to government to enable resource community sustainability.

There's also the Union of B.C. Municipalities and its annual convention, which I feel is an excellent opportunity for rural mayors and council members to discuss rural issues with the Premier, cabinet ministers and MLAs. This government takes the opportunity to work closely with rural community leaders seriously, and in our view, no town is too small. The Rural Futures Institute in B.C. also concerns itself with rural economic and social issues, identifying problems and recommending solutions.

There's also the regional economies task group of the B.C. Progress Board, which is committed to identifying "the means and opportunities to improve the province's regional economies outside the lower mainland. The task group will make recommendations for economic renewal in the province's rural economies, mindful that B.C. is composed of many different and segmented local economies."

There's also the new rural economy project, which is a five-year research project focusing on identifying and addressing vital rural issues, with the B.C. sites being Mackenzie, Tumbler Ridge and Port Alice. In addition, there's the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation, whose mission is to revitalize rural Canada through education and research for rural leaders. It recognizes that Canadians need strong rural communities. Finally, the Community Futures program is a community-driven economic renewal initiative assisting communities adapting to changing economies.

The rural economy is crucial to the wealth and prosperity of this province, and all British Columbians need rural community members to continue to harvest our natural resources in a sustainable manner. This government has worked and will continue to work hard for rural B.C. and make the necessary changes to reinvigorate the economy to ensure that rural B.C. is able to attract the people and investment needed to sustain rural communities.

KENNY McLEAN:
REQUIEM FOR A COWBOY

K. Krueger: On July 13, 2002, Kenny McLean passed away. He was considered by many to be the greatest Canadian rodeo cowboy of all time and a true national hero. He was competing in a senior professional rodeo in Taber, Alberta, when he suffered a fatal heart attack. He was 63 years old.

[1050]

Ken was born May 13, 1939, at Okanagan Falls, B.C. He was a tremendously gifted athlete who could have

excelled in nearly any sport. Ken was breaking colts for his father on the ranch by the time he was 12. By the time he was 17, he was on the road competing in saddle bronc riding against the best rodeo cowboys in the world and winning. He earned one of his first championship buckles at the Kamloops rodeo in 1956, Mr. Speaker, when you were a lad and I was little more than a gleam in my daddy's eye. He went on to win almost every major rodeo in North America at one time or another in his career, including the Calgary Stampede.

In 1959, at the age of 20, Kenny McLean won his first Canadian championship in saddle bronc riding. He won again in 1960 and in 1961 became the first cowboy ever to be crowned Canadian champion bronc rider three years in a row. In 1961 Ken was named rookie of the year on the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association circuit south of the border. In 1962 Kenny McLean earned the title of world champion saddle bronc rider.

After winning a world championship riding bucking horses, Ken also began competing in the calf roping and steer wrestling. He quickly established himself as one of the best all-around cowboys in the world, winning Canadian championships in both steer wrestling and calf roping. He was all-around championship cowboy of Canada four times. Kenny McLean still holds the record for the most major championships ever won by a Canadian cowboy, and that was 14. Kenny McLean became the first rodeo cowboy to be inducted into the B.C. Sports Hall of Fame, in 1974. In 1976 he received the Order of Canada. He is the only rodeo cowboy ever to be inducted thus far as a member of the Order of Canada.

Ken was acknowledged by other champions as the smoothest bronc rider ever to go down the road. He was also a pioneer in teaching the art to others. His rodeo schools were attended by many would-be stars and even world champions at the height of their careers. Larry Mahan, for example, had already been world all-around champion twice when he attended one of Kenny's schools to refine his saddle bronc riding technique.

Retirement was never in the cards for Ken. When he hung up his bronc saddle 25 years ago, he went on to establish a reputation as a top trainer and breeder of performance horses. He also continued to rope and steer wrestle on the regional circuits. He was a role model, mentor and teacher to several generations of rodeo athletes at both ends of the arena. Kenny was much more than a great rodeo cowboy. A thoughtful and articulate man, Ken was always a great spokesman for the sport he loved. When he served on the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association board of directors, he fought hard to increase the rodeo purses, the actual prize money available, so the cowboys could keep pace with rising travel costs.

He also had a deep appreciation for the heritage, music and stories of the west. He toyed a bit with writing song lyrics and exploring the family history of the McLeans. In everything he did, his competitive drive

was never far below the surface. He also had a subtle sense of humour and an intense competitive drive. As his wife, Paula, once remarked to a friend: "You don't want to play Scrabble with him. He's got the whole dictionary memorized."

Kenny McLean was a hero to many up-and-coming young people in the rodeo and ranching community. At the Williams Lake Stampede in July of 2001, Kenny McLean was inducted into the B.C. Cowboy Hall of Fame. He wasn't there to accept the award in person, as he was competing at the senior pro rodeo in Hamilton, Montana, working toward yet another world championship. Ken won the world again in 2001, capturing the senior pro world calf roping championship at the finals in Reno last November. Forty-five years after winning his first buckle, Ken was in the arena and well mounted with his rope in his hand when his number was called — a true champion right to the end.

This tribute was written by Mike Puhallo, a cowboy poet from our area — a man who has gained a reputation continent-wide, perhaps worldwide, for his poetry. He wrote a tribute poem to Kenny McLean, which I'll read:

Today the west is a little less western.
A great cowboy has been called home,
And a hint of sadness hangs in the air
Wherever true westerners roam.
For this man was the best of the best
In the arena or in the hills,
A salty hand in all that he did
A master of those old vaquero skills.
It is still the dream of every young cowboy
Who lives by spur and rein
Just once to hear somebody say:
"He rides likes Kenny McLean."

[1055]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and adios, Ken.

J. Wilson: It is with sadness that we acknowledge the parting of a great rodeo contributor. Rodeo is one of the most dangerous sports that we have. However, it continues to grow, and it is followed by a great many people.

The people that have made this such a truly great sport are people like Kenny McLean. There is hardly a ranch house in British Columbia, western Canada or the western U.S. where the name Kenny McLean does not come up fairly often around the table. His reputation has grown to the point where he is recognized not only by the people that follow the rodeo circuit but by all people that are in the ranching industry.

We have to remember that the sport of rodeo grew right along with the ranching industry in Canada and the U.S. That was the relief, the enjoyment, that the cowboys could get after working hard through the week. They would get together and have a little fun on the weekend. This is where it has gone today. It has become a year-round sport.

I had the privilege of meeting Kenny McLean one time around the campfire at the Quesnel rodeo. I think what will always stay with me.... It wasn't the fact that when I was introduced to him, his reputation had pre-

ceded him, but it was the manner of the man. He was quiet, he was respectful, and he was humble. These were the traits that set Kenny McLean out, apart from the fact that he was a tremendous athlete, which he had to be to reach the level that he did. He had the ability to listen to people, and he always had the desire to try to help you out by showing you something, teaching you little tricks that perhaps you hadn't thought of or didn't know. That was one of his unique characteristics.

We can attain great heights through competition. We can become the best at what we do. The hard work and dedication that go into that are really important, but when someone shows that this comes from the spirit and from the heart.... What you do doesn't necessarily make you great. That comes from remembering your humility and your respect for others and sharing your knowledge with other people.

To me, the best way I could put this is that to all of you hockey fans out there, the name Gretzky rings a bell; he is recognized as someone who has really achieved. To all you hockey fans, Gretzky is the Kenny McLean of the hockey world. With that, I would pay tribute to a man who truly has done a remarkable job not only in the sport of rodeo but with his life.

[1100]

K. Krueger: My thanks to the member for Cariboo North, a rancher and a cowboy in his own right.

Mike Puhallo wrote a poem the night Kenny McLean was inducted into the Canadian Rodeo Hall of Fame, and it goes like this:

It was Falkland Stampede, 1960.
I would have been seven then,
when I climbed to the top of the arena fence,
to stare across the pen.

I couldn't see him, so I asked my dad:
"Can you see Kenny McLean?"
"He's the one in the red shirt, son, just measuring up
his rein."

With awe and wonder I watched him nod,
then spur that horse in the mane.
Thirty years and more have passed,
but that memory will always remain,
'cause when I was a boy of seven,
my hero was Kenny McLean.

Now I sit in the stands on a Saturday night;
it's the Canadian finals, you know.
But for me the most important event
wasn't the rodeo,
because one of the men being honoured tonight
by the Cowboy Hall of Fame
was the best bronc rider that I ever knew,
a cowboy called Kenny McLean,
and high in the stands is a middle-aged man,
who for a moment
is seven again!

Kenny McLean's wife, Paula Jo McLean, is a rodeo athlete in her own right. She was leading the circuit in the senior pro barrel racing when Ken died. She said to Mike Puhallo at his funeral: "McLean would kick my butt" — she didn't say "butt," but she wouldn't want

me being unparliamentary — "if I quit now." She went on to win the senior pro rodeo world championships in ladies barrel racing, breakaway roping and ribbon roping. She also won the all-around championship. She ended up with four world championships in one season, a season that she dedicated to the memory of her husband.

Mike writes of Paula Jo McLean: "It's been said that adversity brings out the best, which explains the temper of folks forged in the west. 'McLean wouldn't want me to quit,' she answered with tears in her eyes," to friends and well-wishers who came to say their good-byes. He was the best in the world and suddenly gone. She loaded the horses and she carried on." Mike adds in his eulogy: "The west is where dreams are a challenge that's meant to be rode." Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. That concludes private members' statements.

Hon. G. Abbott: I call debate on Bill M204.

Second Reading of Bills

THE HUNTING AND FISHING HERITAGE ACT (continued)

B. Bennett: This private member's bill is a short bill, substantively. It's really only one sentence. It's modelled after a piece of legislation that was recently passed in Ontario. Despite the fact that it's a short bill and is really only one sentence, it's a very important bill to a lot of people who live out there in rural British Columbia. I can say that there are literally thousands of people in rural B.C. who are anxious that this House pass this bill. By passing this bill, I would suggest we're sending a clear message to people in rural British Columbia that we respect them, that we respect their culture, that we respect their values and that we respect their heritage. I think that's an important thing for this House to do at this time.

I would like to thank my colleagues who stood up in this House over the past three weeks and spoke in support of my private member's bill. I know I have a lot of support from all over the province, not just from rural British Columbia. Several of my colleagues from urban ridings also stood up in support. I appreciate that.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the bill be read a second time.

Motion approved.

B. Bennett: I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House to be considered at the next sitting of the House after today.

Mr. Speaker: You've heard the question. Those in favour?

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

An Hon. Member: Nay.

Mr. Speaker: The motion is carried.

Bill M204, The Hunting and Fishing Heritage Act, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

[1105]

Hon. G. Abbott: By agreement, we're standing down second reading of Bill M205 and private member's Motion 5.

I would like to call debate on private member's Motion 18: "Be it resolved that this House supports reducing the regulatory burden on BC business that impedes economic growth and job creation."

Motions on Notice

REGULATORY BURDEN ON B.C. BUSINESSES (continued)

R. Stewart: Two weeks ago we adjourned debate on this motion, my motion, a motion that is intended to recognize the enormous cost of overregulation and the enormous effects on our economy and our competitiveness of the regulatory environment that we have inherited, a regulatory environment that in many cases is appropriate but in many other cases, sadly, is excessive, hard to understand, complicated, expensive to administer and expensive to comply with. That expense, as we heard two weeks ago and as we undoubtedly will hear from other members today, is enormous in terms of the types of investment we end up discouraging unwittingly and in terms of the job creation that investment means to the people of British Columbia.

I want to thank the hard-working member for Yale-Lillooet, who earlier today referred to the effects of the regulatory framework, the effects of overregulation, on rural British Columbia. Quite often we from urban British Columbia don't recognize that the regulations established and written here in Victoria apply across this province, and many times they don't bear any resemblance to.... They don't recognize at all, and they don't take into account, the effects and the realities of rural British Columbia. I thank the member for Yale-Lillooet for reminding us all that the regulations affect business in every corner of this province, and rural British Columbia must be taken into account as we move forward with a process to rationalize the regulatory model that British Columbia must live under and the regulatory framework that investment must be prepared to accept as it comes to British Columbia.

Two weeks ago I spoke. Many members have since spoken to me, giving me their own examples. Other people have phoned and e-mailed me with what they describe as — and quite frankly, many of them are — outrageous examples of a regulatory system that doesn't seem to be based at all on common sense. Some of these stories are ridiculous. Some of these examples are

outrageous. You couldn't make up some of these things, because they are so incredibly creative — regulations that don't seem to make any sense at all.

I won't repeat them now, because I know some of my other colleagues want to get up and speak to this issue. I only want to say a few words this morning in wrapping up my comments about this, because I think it's important that we hear from others as well. This motion clearly has struck a chord. This issue has struck a chord with the people in this chamber and the people in British Columbia. I suspect that we'll hear today from many other members who have similar concerns regarding overregulation. I'm going to sit down, and I want to hear them now.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

B. Kerr: When I first looked at this motion, it appeared to be so very self-evident. Clearly, we want to reduce the regulatory burden on B.C. business that impedes economic growth. What could be more obvious than that? Why even debate the issue? Let's just get on and pass that motion. I would like to speak in favour of this motion because of its self-evidency, but nevertheless, it has huge implications when I started looking at it. Who are the regulators? What regulations are we talking about? Are the regulations valid regulations?

[1110]

On one hand, we have a group of regulators, which could be the government, that we all think about immediately from either the federal, provincial, municipal or regional level, and the purpose for them is to control. I mean, their whole job is to want to control something for any number of reasons. They want to control it for safety reasons, accountability, transparency, taxation issues, job security. The more regulations they have, the more work is involved. You look at this sometimes as make-work projects for some people, for the innocent purpose of making their job easier to comply with some of the above items that they wanted to do. In some cases, if you get right down to the person that's enforcing the regulation, it can be an item that this person just wants to control. I think we have to look at all those issues and determine whether they are valid issues, whether we've got the right idea in the regulations — or the regulatory people that are handling it are doing the right thing.

Then on the other hand, you have some businesses — or I'll just say business in general, but some businesses — that would say all regulations impede economic development and job creation. "We want to have total, complete, unfettered access to our markets. We want to have total, complete, unfettered ability to manufacture whatever we want. We want to have the unfettered ability to not worry about regulations or whatever and just get on with our job." We may have these two polarities that we have to address, and I think somewhere in the middle is where we have to arrive.

Now, I mentioned that we tend to think in terms of government being the ones that add to the regulatory

burden, but you know, this can happen in business just as easily. I think as businesses grow and put more people in management capacity and in clerical capacity, each one, in trying to do their job and be accountable and be transparent — again, going back to the other question of job security — is going to make up various regulations and is going to interpret the regulations. The way they interpret the regulations is quite often the problem, not so much the regulation.

I'll tell a funny story. I talked in terms of managers earlier on, in trying to make up the regulations, but the regulations could be interpreted and made up by people in the mailroom, as we say, at the lowest end of the totem pole as far as business is concerned. I remember when I was in public practice, I was expecting a fax to come from my clients right away because we had to address this particular issue. The mail clerk was walking by, and I asked her: "Did a fax come in from client A?" She said: "Yes, I've got it." I said: "Well, I need it. Can you bring it to me?" She said: "Well, no, I can't." I said: "Why?" She said: "I haven't logged it in yet, and I have to log in all the faxes." This led to a discussion of why she took it upon herself to have to log in all the faxes. I finally got her convinced. I said: "Isn't a fax just like a letter?" She finally agreed that it was like a letter, and she removed that regulatory burden so faxes move swiftly throughout the office, thereby not impeding our work. It's just an example.

When we talk in terms of regulatory burden, we're not always talking about the official regulations that government imposes on people. We've also got that in business. I think it's incumbent upon all businesses to go through their own business and determine where they can cut some of the red tape they have created, from the senior CEO level right down to the mail clerk level.

As a number of you know, I'm a chartered accountant. I don't practise anymore. I haven't practised for a number of years, but when I did practise, I had about 300 clients. When you go to your chartered accountant, as a number of you know — or when you go to your lawyer, for that matter — why are you going to them? There's far more than just preparing a set of financial statements or doing audits. So many of our clients were sitting down with us to help them through the regulatory maze. That was our job. We made money from that. We were part of the system. So many times I sat down and said: "God, I would just love to be able to sit down with my clients and not spend my time helping them through the bureaucracy and the regulatory maze, but just help them with their own business about how they can become more efficient and move forward so they could have more capital available to the company to invest in the business, to expand, spend more money in marketing and get out there to expand their product lines, make more sales and bring more profit in, which in turn would create jobs."

[1115]

I think that leads me to one of the burdens we could talk about that creates a problem with impeding economic development. That's the actual cost of regula-

tion. Regulation costs enormously. The money that is spent on regulations — even if it's paying for your employees, additional staff, outside consultation or legal or accounting fees — is all money that could be used in expanding the business and moving it forward by creating new markets, increasing your sales force or spending it on research and development to make your product better so you can compete in a worldwide market that is extremely competitive. That's why, as a government, the way we can help business is to ensure that we don't impose undue regulations on business and the private sector. It may take some money away from chartered accountants or lawyers helping people through this maze, but I can tell you, we would much rather be helping people determine how to get into different markets and work more efficiently than helping them through a bureaucratic maze.

Some of the items I would just like to go through that I thought of from my business. I'm in the grocery business now. Well, I'm in the government business now, but I was in the grocery business. I just thought of my own store and some of the things I had to do or what a small business would have to do when they wanted to start up their business — just to show some of the regulatory burden imposed upon them that takes them away from the business of selling widgets or manufacturing widgets, buying groceries or selling groceries or whatever one's business is. It starts right off. As an individual business, the first thing they have to do today is register their name with a company. A person came to my office the other day with a problem they had just in that one small item. I had to spend almost a half hour of my time determining what the problem was — why this person was having troubles registering their company. Again, right off the bat from the very first step, there is a regulatory burden in there that wasn't compatible because there were two opposing forces in what they had to do, which created a problem for them. Fortunately, I think we solved that problem.

Then you have to register with WCB — the Workers Compensation Board. You have to register with the sales tax. You have to register with the GST. You're going to be filing annual reports with the registrar of companies. You'll be filing annual corporate tax returns if you're a corporation. You'll be filing T4s. You've got payroll that you have to worry about and all the payroll regulations. If you have employees, sometimes human rights issues can come up. Again, some things in the human rights are incompatible. I can call them two opposing forces, where you've got two regulations competing with each other. Of course, one of the problems that happens with regulations is that regulations impose burden upon burden. They can sometimes be in total conflict with each other, and no matter what you do, you're wrong. Getting through that maze is often more difficult for business.

Let me just see if I've got another little compendium of a list here that we have to worry about. You have to be aware of the Labour Code for businesses — as soon as you hire somebody, what the rights of the employ-

ees are and what the rights of you as an employer are. You've got your bank, which again imposes regulatory burden on you.

We can only do what's best from the government point of view, but I'm looking at this motion here and trying to expand it to say: let's look at all regulatory burden, not just the regulatory burden that reflects on government or what we might be doing to business.

In my grocery business we've got FoodSafe items we have to be concerned about. We've got one aspect.... I'll bring this up because it's applicable to the grocery business where there are, again, two conflicting things. One of the things we have to do is that all products that come into the store have to be labelled, we have to know the source of all the products, and the ingredients have to be on it. Essentially, our suppliers have to come up with universal product codes. They send it to us, and we can be sure it's coming from a safe environment that's had inspection at the other end when we bring it in our store.

[1120]

This is well and good. I don't complain about this at all. I think this is excellent for the safety of the public — one of the items that I mentioned earlier, which is critical. It doesn't cost us anything because it's done by the suppliers. It costs them something. But then we turn that around, and items in which we accept deposit on — containers.... We have a container regulation. Certain items we have to charge a deposit on, and as a result of that, we have to bring those back. And what can happen? People can be taking them up from the garbage, they can be going into bins, or they can be taking them from the side of the road. We have no idea where these containers are coming from that have to be brought back to the store. In a small store there's not a separate area to bring back containers. That's usually done by cashiers, who with one hand are scanning through people's produce and with the other hand are taking bags back from somebody who has brought in these containers that have come from any source.

I could tell you a story about that. In one case, the cashier reached her hand in to pull out a container, and the person had his bag of needles in there, and she was poked by a needle. Here we've got a real serious situation where there are two conflicting regulations. One, we have to know where the source of the product comes from, and, two, we have to take back things when we don't know where the product comes from.

That's just a small example in my business where I can say regulations impede us a little bit. The areas that we have to do are myriad. I could go into a number of them. I won't do it, but they're myriad, which they would be in any specific business. I don't want to necessarily mention all of our problems, but needless to say, a number of those regulations are necessary for what I've told you — for safety, accountability, transparency and taxation.

What I hope, though, is that people charged with enforcing those regulations.... This is where the burden really comes sometimes. They take their job too zealously, and they make their own interpretation on these

regulations, which really does impede business. That's what we hope to try to control. If the regulations have to be there and we are the regulators, let's instruct the people that are interpreting those regulations to interpret them with some common sense and not to get bogged down in the fine lettering of everything. Let's use some common sense and not get too overzealous in the interpreting of them, because that definitely can cause problems and impede business, when people are devoting more of their energies to overcoming the regulatory burden than they are in getting out and getting their business going and creating jobs and wealth for the economy. Regulations don't create wealth for the economy. I think we all must recognize that.

I'm just trying to see some other good, exciting stories that I have, but I think I'll leave them somewhere behind, because every business, as I say, can tell a story. I mentioned to you that when we think in terms of regulators, we think in terms of being government. We've got the federal government, and I won't get into that because we don't have much control except maybe the hope that we can have some moral suasion over them to, again, do this with some common sense.

We have our provincial government. I know the hon. Minister for Deregulation is working hard to reduce the number of regulations, and he's succeeding. He's reducing a number of them. He has a specific goal in sight. He's put a challenge to all his cabinet colleagues to say: "If you're bringing in one regulation, you've got to get rid of two." So let's do an inventory of all the regulations we have to ensure they are still valid and still serve the purpose for which they were intended.

I think that's the critical thing — that we should do a review every so often to ensure that these regulations which may have been valid ten years ago are still valid now. Otherwise, we end up in a situation where we just burden one regulation on top of another regulation on top of another regulation, and so many of them could be antiquated. They have nothing to do with the way business is done right now. They don't serve any purpose for safety or accountability. The minister's going through those regulations right now, and I know those will be gone. I have 100 percent confidence in his ability to get rid of those regulations, so the regulations we will have will be regulations that do serve their purpose and are required for safety purposes and for accountability and transparency and even taxation.

My caution would be, again, that we instruct people enforcing those regulations to ensure they don't get carried away and that they do look at it from a commonsense point of view. They can go beyond the letter of the regulation and say, "In this particular circumstance, maybe we should do it this way," and allow the businesses or people in some cases to go unfettered rather than unduly imposing unnecessary regulations on them or an unnecessary interpretation of the regulations.

[1125]

Moving down from the senior government to the most junior government, we get down to the municipi-

palities. Anybody that's doing any development work certainly knows the cost of regulations there, because one municipality could be operating one way and another municipality could be operating another way. If you have businesses in both municipalities... Using our CRD as an example here — there are 13 different municipalities within our CRD with each one imposing different regulations with regards to development, each one having a different concept of what it wants for its community — the developer is caught in the middle of all of these 13 municipalities. That's not unique to this area; I think that goes for the entire province.

Again, it's the way these regulations upon business, developers or anybody just wanting to get a business licence are interpreted within the municipality. Some municipalities can be open for business. They can be just as tough, just as hard on the developer as other municipalities, but they understand that the people coming to the table are wanting to create jobs and expand the economy. They'll approach them, and they'll say okay.

Let's use development. It doesn't have to be development, but let's just use development as an example. You want to do a development in this area here. Your development cost charges are going to be X number of dollars, and you're going to have to do this. That way the person in business knows what's expected of him. He can then make the business decision of whether he wants to do it or whether he wants to go somewhere else. He'll make that decision. He'll say: "Okay, I'll go with it." Then they don't put any more obstacles in front of him. The development goes ahead. The municipality can sometimes get more money or grind a better deal because the developer knows he's going to be allowed to do it after he's struck the deal. That money can go into better roads in the municipality, better transportation infrastructure. It can go into better amenities such as recreation centres and parks. That really expands the economy then and makes it a better place for us all to live.

In other municipalities, it's just the opposite. The engineering departments and the planning departments think it's their job to impede progress, to throw the hurdles in front of the people, and they put them through the hoops. I can give an example of one person — I'm going to say a deck, and this was a deck, but I'm not going back to the decks we talked about a year ago — who wanted to add a deck onto their business; bring in a really first-class deli and just put a deck on the building. That was the only difference they were going to make. It took six months to go through the regulatory burden of the municipality just to put a deck on the business. There was something that would have enhanced the values of the community. It would have created some economic development. Carpenters and people would have had work. Yet six months to go through that, and it didn't happen.

I think somehow we've got to get the culture down into the regulators and the municipalities and say: "Yes, make sure you have these regulations in place for

safety. Make sure you have them in place to get the community that you want, but don't put up roadblocks just for the sake of putting up roadblocks." That happens so frequently.

The municipalities that don't do that are booming. An example that I gave — I'll name the municipality — is Langford. Langford has become famous for being a can-do municipality, but the benefits that Langford has had as a result of that are enormous. More municipalities should look at that as an example. That would really create the economy, jobs and economic development within our own regions. I think that's really important.

I would like to conclude here by saying that when we look at regulatory burden, we have to go beyond the regulations that are just imposed by government. We have to say: "Are the regulations really necessary? Are they interpreted properly?" Some regulations are very important; we have to have them. Then we have to look at the way they're interpreted and the way they're enforced, because there are two costs: the cost of complying with the regulation and the cost of enforcing and monitoring the regulation. I think we have to look at both those costs.

[1130]

I think if we get down, put in the regulations that are necessary, ensure they're not just there for the sake of being there — and this goes for both government and for business internally — take a commonsense approach and create a culture where the economic development and job creation come first as long as you comply with the regulations and do everything in a forthright, fair manner, both our community and our society would benefit.

In conclusion, I definitely support this motion, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

D. Jarvis: I also rise to make a few comments about Motion 18, which essentially says "reducing the regulatory burden on B.C. business that impedes economic growth in this province and job creation in this province."

One of the reasons I entered politics back in '91 was that little was being done by the government then — and, as it turned out, the next government — with respect to encouraging industry and small business in this province. Over the last ten years it would appear that the previous government went out of its way to discourage industry and business that were already established here in the province and didn't encourage new business to come in. They did so by adding thousands of new regulations that burdened the small businesses and large businesses as well.

It was not true that the previous government actually went out of their way to sort of impede business. They just simply did not have any business acuity and did little of any help towards establishing new businesses. Basically, they increased the regulations by the thousands, and these regulations didn't appear to me as though they even realized what they were doing. It meant nothing to them, as few of the members.... I was

sitting across the House on the other side, because in those days there was an opposition. I would look across the floor at the members of the government, and few of them had ever been in business or had a business. The members from the government side essentially had all come from either the union or academia. Oh, there were a couple of lawyers, but we know what lawyers are.

Anyway, as I said, few of them had been in businesses and hadn't really appreciated how burdensome these regulations that they were piling on the small businesses would be. Bankruptcies during that last decade, in the nineties, were in the thousands. Nearly every year we were breaking new records as far as bankruptcies went, and those are not the records that we should be proud of. In 1990 alone, over 1,120 bankruptcies occurred, and small businesses went down in this province. This was occurring every year. By the end of the nineties we were seeing a slowdown on the numbers to around 800 a year, as though that was something to be proud of, but that was ostensibly because small businesses and entrepreneurs were being devastated by these rules and regulations. If it didn't lead to declaring bankruptcy themselves, many were simply closing their doors and walking away because they could not compete in the business they were in.

I look back over the last ten years, and I do not recall one single, major company ever coming into British Columbia — not one — all of this while we were slowly building up to being listed by the United Nations as one of the top countries to live and do business in. All this was while B.C. had the worst private sector growth in all of Canada — the worst private sector growth. What a terrible waste it was during those days. Today we are feeling those effects, and perhaps we have had to go overboard in certain aspects of running businesses in this province, all because they were treated so badly in the previous years.

Now, following the election of 2001, the present government realized that the failure of businesses was due to the regulatory hurdles that had been placed before them over these last two decades. One costly regulatory burden and tax after another was being piled on these businesses, large and small, in every city and town across this province. All these rules, regulations and taxes were heaped upon those who only wanted to work and provide an honest living for themselves and their families.

[1135]

This period of time was remarkable as we in B.C. went from the number one province to number ten, to the bottom, right across Canada. What a thought that we ended up in this province — during the time when there was a high period of business growth in Canada — going from the number one spot down to the last spot due to, ostensibly, the government whose political ideology came first, before the livelihood of its citizens.

The government has changed to one that wants a healthy economy and believes that in order to have growth in this province, we need a healthy economy. In order to fix it, this government believes it's necessary

to rid us of those impediments to the province's large and small business growth. We need a government that would attract new capital investment, one that allows existing businesses to be rewarded through hard work, to be rewarded to create efficiency by the reduction of the enormous regulatory burden that's been placed on them by the previous governments.

Over the past decade we saw our province lag compared to the rest of the country in economic growth. It lagged in investment growth and employment growth, and it was obvious that the change needed to happen. However, over the past year we have realized how difficult changes can be and the trepidation that comes when government is doing that change. This is what we see out there, but we are proceeding ahead with these reductions in regulatory burdens in order to counteract the damage that was done in the past.

The roots of what has made B.C. a great place to live and work and invest in are still here. The skilled, hard-working people are still here, and the solid traditional industries and potential for growth are still here. The resources are still here. We are the location, Canada's gateway to the Pacific, and that aspect is still here. The reduction of regulatory burdens will help our economic growth and job growth.

Last year all the taxpayers in British Columbia received a cut of at least 25 percent in their personal income taxes, and British Columbians earning \$60,000 or less now pay the lowest income tax rate in all of Canada. In addition, the top marginal tax rate is the second lowest in Canada. We have put money back into people's pockets to invest and create some prosperity for them that sustains public services like our health care and education systems. In the past year British Columbia has moved from one of the least competitive tax regimes to one of the most competitive.

In early May, for example, the Fraser Institute, which is loved by some and hated by a few, revealed that Canadian investment managers have ranked B.C. third among Canadian provinces with the best investment climate, which is a significant improvement from being dead last in the institute's previous surveys. Lower taxes and continuing low interest rates are generating consumer confidence in this province. Our housing sales and starts are outpacing the national average. Multiple Listing Service has just released a report that B.C. home sales are up some 37 percent over the same period last year. As well, figures for the first three months of this year show increases in the housing starts, retail sales, exports, manufacturing shipments and employment. All were up in comparison to the last three months in 2001.

I honestly believe that the reduction in the regulatory burden our minister is putting forward is giving some help, and we are all going to benefit from it. We have a competitive tax structure in this province for individuals and businesses, and we're building a positive business environment. We're taking steps to get more value from our resources. All these steps will help revitalize our economy and support the quality of

services — like health and education, as I said — in British Columbia, and we can count on it for sure.

[1140]

It will require vision and determination to get our fiscal house in order and renew our prosperity. With the people and the resources of British Columbia, the talent and innovation that we have to offer, we can build a new future and great hope of unlimited promises for our province and once again bring British Columbia back up into the number one position. On that basis, I have no thoughts whatsoever but that I would have to support Motion 18, which is basically reducing the regulatory burden for British Columbia businesses that impedes the economic growth and job creation. On saying that, I wish to thank you for the opportunity to speak.

P. Bell: I am very, very pleased to support this motion. I think it is extremely important to our society in British Columbia in terms of the growth and development of our economy to reduce and improve upon the regulatory burden. I was absolutely shocked when the Minister of State for Deregulation first did his regulatory count and came up with in excess of 400,000 regulations. I find it absolutely astounding that we would have that many regulations in a province.

You know, coming from a business background, it's interesting. When I speak to businesses not only throughout our province but throughout Canada, business people comment, more often than not, that the deterrence to developing business in British Columbia is more focused on the regulatory burden as opposed to strictly the taxation regime British Columbia has. Taxation is certainly an important part. We need to be competitive in our taxation regime with other provinces, but certainly we have to provide a regulatory burden that is favourable to business in order to provide jobs in the province.

Oftentimes when I'm in discussions, I'll ask people where they have their investments. Most folks over the age of 30 or 35, I guess, probably have some type of an RRSP investment or perhaps a union pension fund they contribute to or something of that nature. Normally, what I do is ask them what their investment strategy is. Typically, what I hear is: "I explain the level of risk I'm prepared to accept to my investment counsellor, and then I tell them I want them to make as much money for me as they possibly can, given the level of risk I'm prepared to accept."

I hear that, regardless of who it is I'm talking to. It doesn't matter whether it's someone who has made a lot of money in their life, has invested continuously and would be considered to be perhaps a right thinker. It might be someone from a labour union — in fact, a teacher or a BCGEU member who perhaps is someone that thinks a little further left and focuses on some of the social values. They pretty well all say that. They want their investment counsellor to make as much money as they possibly can for them, given the level of risk they're prepared to accept.

Typically, what I do at that point is ask them another question. I say: "Where do you have your investments today?" Nine times out of ten, the individual is not able to tell me. They don't know where their money is invested. They've just simply given the direction to their investment counsellor and asked them to generate as much income as they can.

The next question I ask is: "If you're not sure where your money is invested, do you care where your money is invested?" I think that is really the crux of the matter, because these folks — it doesn't matter who they are — generally speaking don't care where the money is invested. They want the best rate of return they can possibly get. The Minister of State for Deregulation will not have completed his task until B.C. becomes the province of choice for that investment. The true measure of our success as a government, in my opinion, is when individuals invest money in their RRSP or invest in their union pension fund and that investment is returned to B.C. The only way that investment will be returned to B.C. is if B.C. is the most attractive climate and offers the best rate of return on those funds.

[1145]

How do you do that? There are two ways. Certainly, there's the taxation regime, and we've been very thorough in dealing with that in our first year and a half in office. I believe we have a competitive tax regime, certainly throughout Canada, but the other absolutely key aspect in this matter is one of regulatory burden. I know that the minister of state has worked very hard to reduce regulations, and I know he's had a reasonable degree of success. I believe the last count was something in the neighbourhood of 23,000 or 24,000 regulations removed, although there was a small addition of, I believe, 7,000 or something in that nature. It still has made a significant difference. I think we've reduced regulations by something in the order of 17,000 at this point on a net basis. That's only a first step. We have to go much, much further.

You know, the beef industry.... My colleague from Cariboo North knows full well that in the beef industry, as does my colleague from Yale-Lillooet, there are no slaughterhouses in B.C. I would ask you, Mr. Speaker. We produce a tremendous amount of high-quality beef in the province of British Columbia, so why is it that we don't have any slaughterhouses and provide the jobs that are associated with this component of the beef industry here in British Columbia?

Well, when I ask that question of individuals who are associated with the beef industry, I'm told it's because the regulatory burden we have here in the province does not allow for the operation of slaughterhouses. What do we do? We load the cattle onto cattle liners, and off they go to Alberta. We add value in Alberta to our cattle, the cattle that we're producing here in British Columbia. We send them out there. They go through the slaughter process and the cutting process. The employment associated, high-paying union jobs, adds value to that beef. Then we load it onto trucks, and it gets shipped back to B.C.

You know, I'm not even sure exactly how many of the jobs we acquire in the trucking industry. I don't know what that number would be, but clearly our inability to provide a regulatory regime that allows for a slaughter industry here in British Columbia.... It's beyond my comprehension why we can't do that. That's, I believe, a simple example of one thing that is key.

I have an oil refinery in my riding of Prince George North. It's one of only two in the province of British Columbia. It was built, I believe, somewhere in the neighbourhood of 30 years ago or perhaps more — 40 years ago now, it would be. It was fortunate that it was built before we created the regulatory burden that we have around the refinery business.

Again, what do we do? We take our oil and put it into pipelines. We ship our oil, the oil that's generated in British Columbia out of our wells, to Alberta. We provide high-paying jobs to Albertans to refine that product into the diesel fuels and gasoline that we consume here in British Columbia. Then we load it back onto trucks — again, I'm not sure how many of those trucking jobs are ours and how many are Albertans' — and truck it back to British Columbia, with the exception of the small refinery in my riding of Prince George North and the other refinery in the lower mainland.

There's another case of where we are taking our natural resource, our natural products, loading it into pipelines and shipping it to Alberta. We aren't the ones, unfortunately, adding value to it; we're sending it to Alberta. They are refining it and sending it back to B.C. Now, is it the taxation regime that's causing that? I am told no. I am told by the individuals in the oil industry that it has nothing to do with taxation. The taxation regime in British Columbia would allow for that oil to be refined here.

What I am told is that there are very compelling reasons to expand and build oil refineries in the province of Alberta because of the regulatory regime that British Columbia has. Again, you know, it's a significant potential investment for British Columbia. And what are we doing? We're loading our oil into pipelines, and we're shipping it off to our neighbours, and then we're bringing it back on trucks.

[1150]

This, Mr. Speaker, is very concerning to me. I can tell you that when I first considered running for political office about two and a half years ago, one of the biggest concerns I had was how we could develop a regulatory regime in British Columbia that would allow us to invite business back into our province. When the Premier designated a specific ministry for this specific objective, I was very, very excited. I continue to be very excited, because I know the Minister of State for Deregulation has the same burning passion around deregulation that I have, if not more so. I know he's very, very excited and passionate about the whole issue of deregulation.

I've spoken about the beef industry; I've spoken about the oil refining business. I think those are two good examples of areas where B.C.'s regulatory regime is not suitable. We need to improve the environment so

that, in fact, instead of exporting jobs, we're bringing jobs back to the province.

That brings me to the piece of legislation that we're currently debating, the results-based forest practices code. I'm very excited that we've taken this step, and I think that demonstrates the willingness of this government to take a practical approach towards regulation.

I was very proud to be part of that particular travelling committee. The member for North Island did a wonderful job of chairing it. We had an incredible number of presentations. There's absolutely no question — make sure this is clear — that there are folks out there who would prefer that we actually add regulation; 400,000 are not enough for some folks. They would like us to regulate the colour of ink that is used to prepare documents. They would like us to regulate the type of paper that is used to prepare documents. I say: let the market decide those issues.

The forest companies that I work with in my end of the world, the major players, are probably the most environmentally conscious companies that I know of throughout the province — or worldwide, for that matter. They care very much about the environment. They understand that in order for them to be able to sell their products on a worldwide basis, they have to demonstrate very, very high environmental values. They simply have no choice but to do that, so they have agreed to move forward on certification projects voluntarily.

Canfor, the largest licensee in British Columbia, have all of their forested lands currently certified under the sustainable forest management regime, the SFI. They are a very conscious company towards certification. They don't need to be highly regulated. You can simply give them results, objectives, goals and targets, and they will achieve those.

To wrap things up, I am very, very pleased to offer my support to this motion. I think that this is extremely important to our government. Perhaps, if we can be known for anything at the end of four years, I would be very pleased if it were that we were the government that brought a regulatory regime back to British Columbia that allowed for employment growth.

K. Stewart: I also rise to support the bill before us, Motion 18, with regards to regulatory burden. In looking at this, I've heard a lot of my colleagues today talk about the regulatory burden and the effect it's had on business. I would like to take a few moments prior to the conclusion of this morning's session to talk about the reason we have regulations. Why do we have all these regulations — 400,000 regulations?

Well, I would like to believe that the rationale for putting in these regulations was to protect people. I think that's a very important thing — that we ensure as a government that we have a society that has certain levels of protection through process. That's the spirit of most regulations. Obviously, somewhere in this process we've gone askew. We have regulation on top of regulation — a regulation to cover off a regulation because it didn't cover off something, or in case it contravenes this, so you have to bring in another regulation so that the con-

travening action is overrun by another regulation — and they just snowball.

[1155]

I think we have to take a step back and look at regulations, why we have them and what they do. I think the primary rationale for regulations is safety. In the workplace we have regulations there to protect the worker and to protect the community in which that organization operates. We have the WCB, a regulatory body, to ensure that workers are protected in the workplace.

There's another responsibility that an employer has to workers, and that's to ensure that they get paid for the work they do. We have a series of regulations that are set both provincially and federally, and some even municipally, to ensure that these actions take place.

Mentioning that brings up another difficulty or complication we have within governments: we have governments. We have a provincial government that has a level of regulatory actions, we have a federal government that has another level of regulatory actions, and we have municipalities that have another level of regulatory actions. In the lower mainland we have the GVRD and the GVTA in another group of organizations that are government-based and bring in their own level of bureaucracy through regulations.

Moving back to the responsibility of a government to protect the workers and protect the community they're in, by protecting the community they're in, what I'm speaking in regards to is mostly environmental. To ensure that the activities taking place in your community by a business or an industry.... They have regulations that protect you.

As we discuss the issue of protection, we also have to look at when some of these regulations were put in place and how the technology has changed over time. A regulation that made a lot of sense in 1920, maybe in 1960 or even in 1980 may not necessarily make as much sense now in 2002. We see technology now where a person can go out with a camera in the woods, with a satellite phone, and stream live video back to anywhere in the world. When you talk about environmental protection, if someone saw something going on in the old days, they'd have to get out and get their notebook, their sketchbook, and write what they saw and maybe take a picture and take it back to get it developed. There's a whole new technology now that probably eliminates half a dozen procedures in that process of regulation.

There's much more I'd like to address with this issue, but noting the time, I would like to move adjournment of the debate.

K. Stewart moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Abbott moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

The House adjourned at 11:58 a.m.