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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
Honourable Iona Campagnolo

4TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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Afternoon Sitting

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TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2003

The House met at 2:04 p.m.

Introductions by Members

J. MacPhail: Philippe Murat — you know him from CBC Radio-Canada — and his wife, Jasmine, are the proud parents this morning of two beautiful baby girls. Thérèse was born at eight last night. She came in at 5 pounds 9 ounces. Two minutes later Charlotte was born, coming in at 6 pounds — oy — 14 ounces. I just had an initial reaction there. But everybody, apparently, is well and resting comfortably.

I'm sure the House will join me in wishing Philippe, Jasmine, Thérèse and Charlotte all the best, and I ask the Speaker to send *félicitations* on behalf of the entire House.

Mr. Speaker: So ordered, and I really appreciated the sound effects.

[1405]

Hon. L. Stephens: In the House today is Samantha McBride. She is here to assist with the job-shadowing in recognition of Women's History Month. Women's caucus members, through the last couple of weeks, have been hosting young women in leadership and encouraging young women to participate in the political process.

Samantha is a grade 11 student from Esquimalt High School. She's on the honour roll. She's a member of the rowing team and the vice-president of the student council. Would the House please make Samantha welcome.

P. Bell: I am very pleased to introduce to the House today the individual that keeps my life on time and deals with all the issues that we are faced with on an ongoing basis. I'm pleased to introduce Charlotte Groot, my constituency assistant from Prince George. Would the House please make her very welcome.

Hon. K. Whittred: Also today in the gallery is Chelsea Parker. She, too, is job-shadowing me today as part of the celebration of Women's History Month. Chelsea is a grade 10 student at Mount Douglas Senior Secondary in Victoria, and her favourite subjects are literature and drama. She's here today to learn more about politics and government. Will you join me, please, in welcoming Chelsea.

M. Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce today two visitors in the gallery. Mr. George Hanson is the executive director of the downtown Nanaimo partnership, working hard to re-establish our downtown as a vibrant part of our community. He's accompanied by his mother, Lila Blackman, who is a resident of the state of Maine. Will the House please make them both welcome.

Hon. J. van Dongen: Visiting us today from Robert Bateman Secondary School are 32 students who are

studying government, and with them are three teachers: Jeff Crocker, Jinny St-Hilaire and Tia Ash. I spoke to these students a few days ago about government, and today they're here to see the practical reality of government. I'd like the House to please make them welcome.

P. Wong: Today joining us in the House are a number of dedicated volunteers and a youth group from the Church of Scientology, which is actively involved in educating youth about the harm of drugs so that the youth will make an important decision to be drug-free. The drug-free marshals who have joined us today are Sharon Werner, Jeff Beaumont, Shauntel Braun, Lindsey Scott, Tyler Smith, Kyle Connor and Brandon McGonigal.

This group, along with our MLA office, organized a successful street-cleaning day this summer to help clean up Fraser Street. Would the House please help me to make them very welcome.

Hon. R. Neufeld: It's certainly a pleasure for me today to introduce a few people to the House, one from my constituency. Today we had a successful oil and gas day, and there were quite a number of oil and gas executives over from Calgary and Edmonton to visit with some of the MLAs.

But staying behind was Pierre Alvarez, the president of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. I believe — I'm not sure — he might be here: Doug Haughey, the president of Duke Energy. I have here Ross Curtis, assistant deputy minister of the oil and gas division in my ministry, and from my constituency a good friend of mine by the name of Bob Fedderly. He's the president of the Northern Society Oilfield Contractors and represents a lot of folks that are working in the oil and gas industry in Fort St. John, Fort Nelson and Dawson Creek. Would the House please make them welcome.

R. Hawes: In the House today are two former colleagues of mine and now close associates: the mayor of Mission, Abe Neufeld, and the city administrator, Glen Robertson. Could the House please make them both welcome.

Hon. G. Collins: I just ask the House to make welcome two people who are here with me today. The one who spends most days here with me in the Legislature is Adam Buchanan, who is the executive assistant in my office. With him today, as well, is a gentleman who works out of my constituency office, Mr. Eric Hogan. I ask the House to make them welcome.

[1410]

I. Chong: Earlier today I had the pleasure of meeting with two fine gentlemen to discuss concerns regarding their profession — the opticians. Joining us in the gallery is Mr. Don Smith, president of the Opticians Association of Canada, and with him is Mr. Brian Maycock, a highly successful owner of a family-run busi-

ness here in Victoria, Maycock Optical. Would the House make them both welcome.

J. Kwan: I see that visiting us in the visitors' gallery is Susan Thom, the communications director of B.C. Housing. I recognize her from the days when we were in government, and there were lots of housing announcements and openings of affordable housing. Would the House please make welcome Susan Thom.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

PARKS AND PROTECTED AREAS STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

Hon. J. Murray presented a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: a bill intituled Parks and Protected Areas Statutes Amendment Act, 2003.

Hon. J. Murray: I move that Bill 84 be read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. J. Murray: I'm pleased to introduce a bill that makes amendments to both the Park Act and the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act. British Columbia is home to the third-largest park system in North America, behind only the national park system in Canada and the U.S.A. We have a park system to be proud of. This government's goal is to continue to make that system even better. We'll continue to welcome and cater to all visitors by providing more choice and more opportunity.

With these amendments to the Park Act, we recognize there are economic opportunities that exist within our provincial parks that can be accessed while continuing to protect the important environmental and recreational value of our parks. Further amendments to the Park Act contained in this bill will clarify the rules for directional drilling under lands in the parks and protected area system, consistent with current practices in protected areas and consistent with government's new-era commitment to ensure no mining or logging in our parks. In addition, amendments to the Protected Areas of British Columbia Act will amend the boundaries of seven parks in the schedules of that act.

I move that the bill be placed on the orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 84 introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

INSURANCE (MOTOR VEHICLE) AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

Hon. G. Collins presented a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: a bill intituled Insurance (Motor Vehicle) Amendment Act, 2003.

Hon. G. Collins: I move that the bill be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Collins: This piece of legislation completes the legislative reform of the Motor Vehicle Act and the Insurance Act as it relates to the core review of ICBC and greater provision for optional insurance and competition in the optional insurance market.

The bill amends the Insurance Act so that it applies a consistent set of statutory provisions to both public and private providers of auto insurance, including the mandatory basic insurance provided by ICBC and optional vehicle insurance provided by ICBC and private insurers.

At present the Insurance Act and Motor Vehicle Act apply to all ICBC insurance, basic and optional, and part 6 of the Insurance Act governs optional insurance policies issued by private insurers. This act will further competition between the public and private providers as well as level the playing field between the two, resulting in greater choice for consumers. This act completes the core review of ICBC announced late last year.

I move the bill be placed on the orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 93 introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

[1415]

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

SUMAS ENERGY 2 PROJECT AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY PRODUCTION

B. Penner: When will we find out if SE2 will be permitted to build power lines into the Fraser Valley in order to hook up their proposed power plant? That's the question I've been asked repeatedly ever since the National Energy Board wrapped up hearings in the middle of September. Along with many Fraser Valley residents and municipal leaders, MLAs for Maple Ridge-Mission, Abbotsford-Clayburn, Abbotsford-Mount Lehman, Chilliwack-Sumas and a riding known as Chilliwack-Kent joined the provincial government as official interveners in the process. During 23 days of evidence and seven days of closing argument, the B.C. government argued strenuously that the Sumas Energy 2 proposal was not a project which fitted the National Energy Board's criterion of "public convenience and necessity." Frankly, it's anyone's guess when the NEB will release their decision, but I think we may hear something by Christmas. Is it just a waiting game at this point, or is there something else we can do?

Although the hearings are finished, there is more we can do. Thanks to B.C.'s new energy policy, clean

sources of electricity are coming on line. The more we can encourage this type of energy production, the less demand there will be for power from projects like SE2. At this moment work is well underway on the Furry Creek small hydro project near Squamish. This is where our Minister of Finance and Minister of Energy announced a tax break for run-of-the-river projects back in August, a move which signals the government's support for this type of renewable energy.

Along with the members for West Vancouver-Capilano and Burnaby North, I was pleased to be on hand for the announcement. It was rewarding to see people from throughout the Fraser Valley, including Chilliwack, working on the project and earning very respectable paycheques. An even bigger project is under construction now at Rutherford Creek, near Pemberton; and the Brandywine Creek project, south of Whistler, was commissioned only a few weeks ago. Other small hydro projects are nearing completion on Vancouver Island.

About ten days ago I met with proponents of B.C.'s first-ever commercial wind power project. They have now completed a power purchase agreement with B.C. Hydro, including payment of a non-refundable deposit of \$400,000. Now they must proceed through the environmental assessment process, which I sincerely hope won't take too long. While we're waiting for the decision on SE2, there is, in fact, more we can do, and the good news is that we are doing more.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE CARIBOO

K. Krueger: Mr. Speaker, as you know better than anyone in this House, in 1970 Cariboo College was founded by a group of men and women who knew young people in the interior had a desire to get a post-secondary education close to their homes. I wasn't even old enough for a driver's licence at the time, but I've certainly heard a lot about it since I've been in Kamloops.

When Cariboo College opened, it consisted of little more than its student body and instructors — 500 full-time and part-time students who studied in primitive facilities by today's standards. Today the University College of the Cariboo has a modern, high-tech campus. It has an enrolment of more than 10,000 students who come from all over British Columbia, Canada and 49 other countries including China, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Brazil and Switzerland. It offers 48 bachelor's degree options in 12 different program areas, 20 diploma programs and 34 different certificates in a variety of subjects, and it has a tremendous record in trades training.

It has specialty courses for first nations and programs such as adventure guiding, bachelor of tourism management, respiratory therapy, animal health technology and bachelor of journalism, which are not offered anywhere else in British Columbia.

UCC has a sports program that rivals any in the country. In fact, UCC varsity athletics has been accepted into the Canada West conference of Canadian

Interuniversity Sports. Starting in 2005, UCC athletes will be competing against UBC, SFU and UVic athletes and other top athletes from western universities.

However, as impressive as it already is, UCC has room to grow and get better. It sits on 250 acres of land overlooking the North Thompson valley. It still has 60 acres to expand in — enough land to meet the growing demand for class seats and to build new structures such as the Trades and Technology Centre that opened five years ago, an international building that is now under construction and a new Actors Workshop Theatre that opened this fall through the funding of this government.

There is a group of people in Kamloops named the Friends of UCC University Society, who have come together with one goal in mind: to get official recognition, through name, that University College of the Cariboo is a full-fledged university. They have galvanized the people of Kamloops and the region, who know what opportunities lie ahead for our community and our province if UCC can achieve official university status. I support their efforts, and I know you do also, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank them and pay tribute to the work they have done. I would also like to thank the Minister of Advanced Education, who has listened intently to our proposal. We look forward to more discussions in the near future.

[1420]

TARA SINGH HAYER

D. Hayer: Like many of my colleagues, I attended Remembrance Day ceremonies last week to pay homage to the courage and dedication of those who so bravely fought for the freedom we enjoy today. There is another remembrance this week, also for a courageous freedom fighter. Today I remember my father, who dedicated his life for a different kind of battle. With a stroke of his pen, he fought for freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom that so many of us take for granted. I especially remember him today, because five years ago on November 18 my father was assassinated for standing up and speaking up through his newspaper, for defending the freedoms and democracy we enjoy today.

To recognize the sacrifice made by my father, Tara Singh Hayer, there will be a memorial service — the fifth annual memorial service — at the Guru Nanak Sikh Temple in Surrey. The services will be held Friday, Saturday and Sunday, with the main service being held on Sunday, November 23, at 10:30 a.m. I invite all in the House who are available to join me on that day to celebrate his life and the contributions he made to further the cause of peace, security, freedom and the preservation of democracy.

While I remember the tragedies that have occurred to preserve our way of life, I am also reminded personally every day that we have all faced sacrifice. To keep what we hold so precious, we must all be vigilant, and each in our own way we must be willing to defend and preserve it.

Oral Questions

PRIVATIZATION OF B.C. RAIL

J. MacPhail: The Premier likes to talk about the supposed benefits that will flow to the taxpayer as a result of breaking his election promise not to sell or privatize B.C. Rail. Today we learn that there may be no benefits to the taxpayer at all if the Premier sells B.C. Rail to one of his biggest campaign backers, CN. Everyone familiar with this file knows that CN is salivating over the potentially billions of dollars in untapped tax write-offs sitting on B.C. Rail's books.

Now, the Premier may be happy to eliminate competition for his big-money campaign backer — more than \$107,000 in election donations — but he's got a bit of a problem on his hands on the tax side. To the Premier: is he going to offer CN an indemnity against the possibility that Revenue Canada rules against CN's plans to write off billions of dollars?

Hon. G. Campbell: The member opposite was in attendance at the transportation conference which was organized with northern representatives and with representatives from the federal government as well as representatives from the province. She actually heard the communities of the north saying to this government directly: "Our recommendation would be for the province to retain ownership of the railbed and rail tracks and their partner to offer freight and passenger services."

People from the north said to us that we had to improve on the quality of service that B.C. Rail offered. People from the north told us that it was time for us to see some investment in B.C. Rail that would encourage economic development from the Peace to the northwest, to Prince George, to the Alberta border. Our government is committed to assuring that there is an integrated rail service that meets the needs of the north and the heartlands of this community so the economies in the north and the heartlands can reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has a supplementary question.

J. MacPhail: Well, once again the Premier misrepresents what a body decided or didn't decide, and he continues to duck the central issue. When he told the voters he would not privatize or sell B.C. Rail, he wasn't telling them the truth, and he just admits that now. All along, the Liberal government has been planning to sell B.C. Rail, and it was prepared to say whatever it took to get elected in order to do so.

Reality is setting in, and let me just give some of that reality. Let's find out what the benefits to the province are if it sells B.C. Rail. There's no benefit to the shippers. They'll pay higher rates. There's no benefit to the communities. They'll see reduced levels of services and huge amounts of money leaving their economies. There's no benefit to the employees. They'll see at least 600 jobs disappear.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

J. MacPhail: There's no benefit to the taxpayer, because the government...

[1425]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. Would the member please now put her question.

J. MacPhail: Yes, I will.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you.

J. MacPhail: There's no benefit to the taxpayer...

Mr. Speaker: Now, please.

J. MacPhail: ...because the government appears ready to hand over B.C. Rail to one of its biggest campaign donors.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

J. MacPhail: To the Premier: cut the spin, drop the message box, admit the truth. Will he now admit that the B.C. Rail campaign promise wasn't worth the glossy paper it was written on?

Hon. G. Campbell: Here's the truth, Mr. Speaker. B.C. Rail has \$500 million of debt. B.C. Rail has had to write off \$800 million over the last 15 years. Shippers told us it was time to change — that they couldn't count on B.C. Rail. Communities told us that B.C. Rail had to be integrated into the northern transportation networks or we would not be able to serve their needs.

This government said to communities in the north, who came and said: "We must work together to find a private rail operator to meet the needs of industries — forestry, mining and tourism." The province has given an assurance to retain the ownership of the track and railbed. They're satisfied with that. The mayor of Prince George has said to us that their recommendation was that we retain ownership — we retain ownership, public ownership — of the rail and the railbed. We will do that so that infrastructure is always there to meet the needs of northern and interior communities in British Columbia, and we will do that.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has a further supplementary.

J. MacPhail: Mr. Speaker, what this Premier refuses to acknowledge is that he hasn't received one new piece of financial information from the time he promised northern communities he wouldn't sell or privat-

ize B.C. Rail — not one new piece of financial information.

He likes to talk about the demands of the community and the supposed benefits that will flow to the taxpayer, but today we learn that there may be no benefits to the taxpayers at all if the Premier sells B.C. Rail to his biggest campaign backer of them all — CN.

This government was wrong to try to sell off the Coquihalla. It reluctantly dropped those plans. It was wrong to try to sell off the liquor stores. It dropped the plan for now, anyway, when he realized the former minister had botched the plan.

Now, the Premier has an opportunity to admit another mistake — something I know it's difficult for him to do — and he can say to his big campaign donor: "I'm sorry, the \$107,000 helped me get elected, but unfortunately you can't have B.C. Rail in return. It's just not going to work."

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

J. MacPhail: Instead of putting the taxpayers...

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please. It's time to put the question, hon. member.

J. MacPhail: ...on the hook for millions of dollars in a bad deal...

Mr. Speaker: Now, please.

J. MacPhail: ...why doesn't the Premier tell his party to give CN its \$107,000 back and cancel this bone-headed plan?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Hon. G. Campbell: You know, we have an enormous opportunity in this House to serve the needs of northern communities, to serve the needs of northern workers, to build an industrial plant in the north that they can count on...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. G. Campbell: ...and that's sustainable for the long term. It is unequivocal that you need an integrated rail service to meet the needs of our customers and the shippers of British Columbia, whether they're in the forest industry or the mining industry. There is no question about that.

There is no question that we need an integrated shipping network. There is no question that we need more competitive rates. There is no question that the costs that have been associated with B.C. Rail...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. G. Campbell: ...delivering services have been onerous. So we are doing exactly what the mayors of northern communities asked us to do. They said to us, and again I quote.... Let me quote directly. The member opposite had this. She may decide not to read it, Mr. Speaker, but she knows that this is true: "Our recommendation would be for the province to retain ownership of the railbed and rail tracks and their partner to offer freight and passenger services."

Now, that was said once to the member, it was said again at a special meeting of northern mayors, and it was said again at a shippers' conference last December. Following that, what the shippers and what the communities said to us was clearly: "Get on with the job. We want the service. It's time for action." And we will act, Mr. Speaker.

[1430]

B.C. RESORT TASK FORCE

T. Christensen: Well, it may be raining outside here in Victoria, but throughout a number of mountains in the interior it is snowing furiously today. As all members of the House should know by now, my riding is home to Silver Star ski resort, one of British Columbia's most spectacular and fastest-developing resort destinations.

As part of our....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Let us hear the question.

T. Christensen: My constituents have a great deal of interest in what happens at Silver Star ski resort as it is a foundation of part of the economy in the Vernon area. As part of our new-era commitment to stimulate tourism and our plan outlined in the throne speech last spring to establish a B.C. resort task force, the Minister for Deregulation was appointed chair of the task force.

I know the Minister for Deregulation has been working hard in terms of the task force's purposes. I was hoping that the minister could provide my constituents with some update on what is happening with the B.C. resort task force and how that is going to benefit Silver Star ski resort and other resorts throughout the interior.

Hon. K. Falcon: As you know, the Premier back in February toured over a dozen alpine ski resorts and came away with a recognition that these resorts can be huge economic generators. Just to give you an idea, Whistler alone generates over a billion dollars in economic activity, representing some 10 percent of the tourism revenues of this province.

What we said under the leadership of our Premier was that we were going to look at every single resort across the province and see what barriers the government has put into place and make sure we reduce those barriers. We unleashed the unbelievable power and potential of resorts right across British Columbia to ensure that we capitalize on 2010 and all the folks who will be coming and looking at this great province and realizing what fantastic natural resorts and what great people we have here.

PRIVATIZATION OF B.C. RAIL

J. Kwan: The one document that the Premier forgot to look at is the new-era commitments that he himself put out, and in it: "We will not sell or privatize B.C. Rail." Maybe the Premier has forgotten that promise.

You know, watching the Liberals twist on the B.C. Rail file will make for good entertainment if it weren't for the fact that this flagrant broken promise will hurt jobs and the economy in the north. Recently the northern customers of Agricore United, one of B.C. Rail's big customers, passed a resolution condemning the government for its broken promise.

Here's what one of these B.C. Rail customers said in a letter to the Premier: "Public ownership of B.C. Rail is crucial to the economic well-being of all British Columbians. B.C. Rail has the advantage of providing competition in the marketplace and direct access to the Asian marketplace." This was sent to the Premier just last week.

The government is out of excuses. B.C. Rail makes money, its debt is manageable, and its customers say its service is dependable.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

J. Kwan: Will the minister stop...?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order, please, hon. members. Order. Would the member please now put her question.

J. Kwan: Will the Minister of Transportation stop twisting in the wind and just admit that her government has betrayed British Columbians on B.C. Rail?

[1435]

Hon. J. Reid: There is so much growth potential in the north and in the rail services, and that previous government could not accomplish any of that growth. We have had to consolidate the services of the freight rail side. There are hundreds of jobs available for the passenger-tourism sector. There are jobs available in the growth of industry when we get a rail partner who can invest and can see that growth happen. The frustration we've had and industry has had is that there has not been access to more capital for more growth, and

that investment is going to create the economic opportunities we all want to see.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has a supplementary question.

J. Kwan: Well, in the free enterprise economy the customer is always right. In their resolution condemning the government, Agricore customers said the B.C. Liberals have no mandate to sell the company. They say that the sale of B.C. Rail would result in higher freight charges. Employees will be laid off, and northern interior lines will be abandoned.

These customers say that the vision laid down by W.A.C. Bennett for B.C. Rail still holds true today. Everyone knows the government is — what this minister refuses to admit — selling B.C. Rail to CN. Why is it so hard for the minister just to admit the truth? Does she think British Columbians are gullible enough to believe the deal isn't already done?

Hon. G. Campbell: Mr. Speaker, here's the truth. British Columbia needs to have a rail system that takes our products to their marketplace. British Columbia needs a rail system that delivers as cost-effectively as possible. British Columbia needs a rail system that delivers....

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Order. Order, please. Order! Order!

Will the Leader of the Opposition please retract that statement unequivocally.

J. MacPhail: No, I won't, Mr. Speaker. I won't retract it, because if he's saying it's the truth now, then he was lying before.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. member, if you do not retract the statement unequivocally, I have no choice but to ask you to leave the chamber.

J. MacPhail: I'm not going to retract the statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Then I have no choice, hon. member, but to ask you to leave the chamber.

[J. MacPhail left the chamber.]

Hon. G. Campbell: The truth is that we need an integrated rail...

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

Hon. G. Campbell: ...system to meet the needs of our resource communities in the north. The truth is that we are not going to sell the railbed. We are not

going to sell the tracks of B.C. Rail. We are going to provide for economic investment in the heartlands of this community. The truth is that there are going to be more jobs in the north. There are going to be more jobs in the heartland, because at last we have an integrated transportation system that works for all British Columbians.

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[End of question period.]

Reports from Committees

K. Stewart: I have the honour to present the second report of the Select Standing Committee on Crown Corporations respecting a review of the Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, the British Columbia Utilities Commission, the British Columbia Hydro and Power Authority, the homeowner protection office and the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia.

I move that the report be taken as read and received.

Motion approved.

K. Stewart: I ask leave of the House to permit the moving of a motion to adopt the report.

Leave granted.

K. Stewart: I move that the report be adopted, and in moving the adoption of the report, I wish to make the following comments. First, I thank the Clerk's office and staff for their continued high level of support to our committee.

Our committee is committed to the improvement of reporting and accountability processes of the British Columbia Crown corporations and is pursuing a number of new initiatives to meet this goal, specifically in the areas of performance measurement and governance. The operation of boards will also be more closely scrutinized for their performance by the committee.

[1440]

In closing, I would like to thank the committee members for their time, energy and expertise, which allows for the accountability and transparency of Crown corporations for the benefit of all the citizens of British Columbia.

Motion approved.

Orders of the Day

Hon. G. Collins: I call Committee of the Whole for consideration of Bill 79.

[1445]

Committee of the Whole House

COLUMBIA BASIN TRUST AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

The House in Committee of the Whole (Section B) on Bill 79; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

[1450]

The committee met at 2:52 p.m.

On section 1.

J. Kwan: You'll have to excuse me for a moment, Mr. Chair. My colleague the Leader of the Opposition was carrying this bill, and I wasn't expecting to do committee stage on this bill until just now. So you'll excuse me if I stumble here and there.

Bill 79, the Columbia Basin Trust Amendment Act, 2003, was introduced two Tuesdays ago. Under section 1, here are some general questions for the minister. In introducing this bill, the minister said this bill would enable the trust to "more efficiently deliver its legislated mandate." So let's look at that mandate. It says in section 4 of the Columbia Basin Trust Act:

"4 (1) The purpose of the corporation is to invest, spend and otherwise manage the regional allocation and the corporation's other assets, including any assets that may be transferred to it, for the ongoing economic, environmental and social benefit of the region including, without limitation, for

- (a) the social well being of the residents of the region,
- (b) the preservation, protection and enhancement of the environment of the region,
- (c) the economic development of the region, and
- (d) any other prescribed purposes.

(2) Nothing in subsection (1) relieves any level of government from any obligations it might have with respect to the region."

[1455]

It is with interest we note what the present minister had to say about this section during debate in 1995. At that time he said:

"To get back to the question, is the province's responsibility not already the social well-being of the residents of the region? Is the province's responsibility not already the preservation, protection and enhancement of the environment of the region? Is the province's responsibility not the economic development of the region and any other prescribed purposes? One seems very opposite to the other, and what I see — subsection (2) — is really a contradictory statement altogether."

The minister, then, was not what one would call a fan of the mandate of the trust. In fact, he questioned the need for it.

I'm sure the minister will understand that there is a certain amount of skepticism in response to the changes he's proposing in this bill. The minister is, with this bill, increasing the power of the provincial government as it relates to the management of the trust, and he is not a big supporter of the legislated mandate

of the trust. What assurances can the minister provide that the independence and local focus of the trust will be continued with the passage of this bill?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Again, it's great to put on the record that we are not changing how the trust operates. What we are doing with this bill is simplifying a few items, items that no longer need to be there. There are some deregulation initiatives taken.

I'll deal in general, if it's the will of the Chair, as the question was general. The trust will still manage its assets the way it always has. Columbia Power Corporation will still manage the assets along with the trust. The Columbia Basin Trust will still have the authority to spend their share of the proceeds however they want to spend their share of the proceeds, exactly as it was envisioned in 1995.

The only difference here is that — and although it's in the next section, I will say it — we're reducing the board from 18 to 12. That's by agreement of the board. They would rather have a smaller board than a large board, so we're accommodating those things. Nothing changes as to how they want to spend their share of the money that comes forward from those investments.

J. Kwan: Well, no. We'll get into more detailed debate when we get to the next section, which is, of course, about the makeup of the board. It has substantively changed with this piece of legislation. Therefore, what will happen with decisions from the board may result in changes in their decisions because of the makeup of the board. We'll get into that when we get to that section.

The minister did not answer the question, though, in terms of how local focus will be maintained and how the independence of that board will be maintained. The fact is that the makeup of the board is going to be changed. It's no longer going to be community people. How will one ensure that there's local focus with respect to the work of this board?

[K. Stewart in the chair.]

Hon. R. Neufeld: I want to draw us back to section 1, but let me reassure the member, and I'm going to reassure the people in the Kootenays. The board members, all 12, will actually come from the Kootenays. They will be people in the community, who live in the Kootenays, in the area that's represented by the Columbia Basin Trust. That will not change.

Prior to this change, there were six members appointed by the previous government and 12 from the region. All we're changing is that six will come, again, from the government. The Kootenay caucus has recommended and has processed the names of the people from the region that are acceptable. At least, I certainly haven't heard or received one letter that said those six people that government appointed are not the people to represent the people in the Kootenays. I can assume from that, then, that the government appointees — the

ones that government actually appoints — are satisfactory to the people in the Kootenays. The other six will be given to us. Names will be given to government, to board resourcing, by people from the five different regional districts and one tribal council.

[1500]

Now, I don't know what that member doesn't get about how that's not people from the Kootenays. It still amazes me that someone can stand in this House and say the people won't be from the Kootenays when they will be from the Kootenays. They are from the Kootenays, and they will always be from the Kootenays. I can't express that more. I hope this member actually reads the bill to find out how those people are appointed. She may not like a board going from 18 to 12, but I can tell you that the people on the board like it going from 18 to 12. There are some reasons for the matter of fact that we have to appoint all of those by Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council, and that should be well understood.

No one is trying to usurp anything from the Kootenays. This is all about representation from the Kootenays on the Columbia Basin Trust so the Columbia Basin Trust can move forward, carry on its business as it normally has with people represented from the Columbia basin.

J. Kwan: It simply is not a true representation of how the community feels about the changes being proposed in this bill, Mr. Chair. The fact of the matter is that the community is greatly concerned with the proposed change. What the minister refuses to acknowledge is that with the change in this bill, it actually takes away local representation chosen by the people from the community — not a government-chosen board on which the government has a bunch of stooges who will simply do what the government tells them to do. That would be their caucus.

The minister can pretend all he wants that somehow he's listening to the people, while nothing could be further from the truth. Let me ask the minister this question. Has he received any correspondence from the public, news reports — meetings? No doubt he's heard a lot of those going on in terms of opposition to this bill. Has the minister received any correspondence or proposal from the current board in relation to the changes we find in this bill?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I mean, if we want to discuss this issue, we should really be doing it in the next section, but I'm quite willing to do it in this section.

Again, you know, you can stand there and say whatever you want, but the people that are appointed by government to the board are actually people from the Kootenays. Now, if you're telling me that those six people that we appointed just recently are stooges, I find that a bit offensive. I would think that the folks who just got appointed to that trust by government — those six people and the rest of the people on the board that you refer to as stooges — should all be just a little bit upset with that member.

Now, I don't know who she's referring to as stooges, but that is unacceptable to stand in this House.... Actually, I've heard that member chastise me and others for not paying attention to parliamentary rules, and I can't believe that member stood up in this House and called every member of the Columbia Basin Trust a stooge. Can you imagine how disrespectful, how absolutely disrespectful that is to those folks who put their names forward to sit on the board to make sure that money is expended in the Kootenays for the benefit of the Kootenays?

But then maybe she's referring to past boards. Let me read a few names. I don't know. Is she referring to Dave Bjarnason as a stooge? Or to Jo Brown as a stooge? Or to Ed Conroy? Now, he used to be an MLA in this House. He used to be a cabinet minister in a government that she was in. Is that a stooge? Jim Doyle, also an MLA from the Kootenays who sat in cabinet, I believe, as Minister of Forests — is he a stooge? Or is Joanne Partridge a stooge? Is that what that member is referring to — that these people that actually put their names forward are stooges?

One change that will happen under this government is that we won't appoint MLAs to the Columbia Basin Trust. There are people that are willing to sit on the Columbia Basin Trust for the benefit of the folks in the Columbia basin. They are there now, and there are six of them that were just recently appointed and are spending that money wisely.

[1505]

I find it offensive, and I would actually ask you, Mr. Chair, to ask that member to withdraw that statement. Otherwise all the members that she has appointed.... She was part of a government from 1995 to 2001 that appointed a whole bunch of people, and I could read all their names. Anne Edwards — is that a stooge? I don't know. Fred Parker — is that a stooge? Is that what she's referring to?

I'm telling you, Mr. Chair. I think that what you should do.... If she's a bit upset about question period, I'm fine with that. Her member chose to get thrown out of the House — no one else. Her Leader of the Opposition chose to get thrown out of the House. I would ask that that member....

Interjections.

The Chair: Members. Members, the minister has the floor.

Hon. R. Neufeld: I would ask that that member remove that statement calling all the people that have been appointed to the Columbia Basin Trust stooges. That is unfair. There are six appointed by government. There are six good people, six excellent people. The other six people that come from recommendations.... Again, Mr. Chair, I say to you that we're going to deal with that in the next section. Those six that are recommended from the five regional districts and from the tribal council, I am sure, will all be good, solid representatives of the Kootenays who have the Kootenays at

heart and should not be subject to being referred to as stooges.

The Chair: I'd like to remind the members to keep it in a civil tone. If the member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant wishes to restructure her comments, she may. If not, we will continue in a more civil tone.

On section 1, the member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: Well, here's the difference between the previous bill, the bill called the Columbia Basin Trust, with the makeup of the board and how it changes under this government. I will name some of the appointees that this government, this minister has put on that board and give you some background, Mr. Chair, about those individuals, which is why the concern has been raised — that I raise with respect to whether or not the decisions will be in the best interests of that community. Or will there be ulterior...? Well, let me just stop there. Let me just put on the record the makeup of the trust before.

Point of Order

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, before the member asks her question, we ask that the name "stooge" be removed and that the member apologize to those folks that have spent time on the Columbia Basin Trust and may spend time on the Columbia Basin Trust moving forward. I'd like to see that happen, please.

The Chair: Just one moment, and we'll confer on that.

Members, I already mentioned earlier in the strongest terms to keep this conversation at a civil level. I would caution the members to keep their comments on personality in a negative way out of this discussion.

We are now talking on section 1 of the bill, and if we can continue with section 1 with questions pertaining to it.

Debate Continued

J. Kwan: Let me just outline from the existing piece of legislation that this government is just about to override with Bill 79, the Columbia Basin Trust Amendment Act, 2003. The appointment of the board formerly requires that two must be appointed by the board of the regional district of Central Kootenay. Two must be appointed by the board of the Fraser–Fort George regional district. Two must be appointed by the board of....

Point of Order

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, if we're done with section 1, I would just as soon pass section 1. We're reading now the next section in the bill. If we can just move on forward through it, that would be great.

The Chair: Members, in looking at the bill, it does appear that the member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant's comments are more relevant in section 2. If she would like to allow us to continue on — passing section 1 or voting on section 1 — and bring up that discussion in section 2, I think it would be more appropriate.

[1510]

Debate Continued

J. Kwan: I have a whole host of questions. As I mentioned at the beginning of the debate under section 1, I have a series of general questions for the minister. The minister himself brought up the makeup of the board, specifically, and he had advised that he would not mind answering questions relating to that — which is why I actually went into the makeup of the board per the minister's direction in his answer to my question.

Section 1 actually deals with the nominating bodies as well as with qualified individuals. When we look at that in a broad scope, we can also look at, really, the specific makeup of that board and who is deemed to be qualified individuals. It is in that context, Mr. Chair, that I am asking these questions.

The Chair: Member, I'll just remind you. If you could keep it in the general terms, that would be great, and we can continue on. If it's specific, please hold those till section 2, and we would be more than pleased to give you your time at that point.

J. Kwan: I'll be happy to do so, Mr. Chair. I'll be happy to do so.

Then let me go back to ask the minister whether or not the minister has received any correspondence or proposals from the current board in relation to the changes we find in this bill.

Hon. R. Neufeld: We have received some correspondence in regard to section 2, which actually deals with boards.

J. Kwan: The minister says he has received some letters relating to section 2. Has he received other correspondence relating to this bill in general, whether it be section 2 or section 3 or any other section — but with respect to this bill in general? Has he received any correspondence?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, I guess I read the media reports on a daily basis, but as far as a lot of letters, no.

J. Kwan: Will the minister table the letter from the municipality of Creston — table that document in this House today?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I'm saying that we have received some correspondence in regard to this, and we have read, obviously, some news media about it. But I

would like to get on with passing section 1 and get on with the boards.

J. Kwan: The minister didn't answer my question. Will he table the correspondence from the municipality of Creston in this House?

Hon. R. Neufeld: The staff. Actually, I was remiss when I started, but we were waiting for quite a while to start. I have with me Dana Hayden, deputy minister and CEO of Crown agencies secretariat here on my left; Les McLaren, executive director of Crown agencies secretariat; and Arn van Iersel, the comptroller general, Ministry of Finance, right behind me.

I guess we have received kind of a letter from the town of Creston. It's addressed to the MLA for Nelson-Creston, Blair Suffredine. Interestingly, it's not copied to me, so I guess, in reality, I had it given to me. It was not sent to me.

J. Kwan: The minister is in receipt of this letter in any event. Will he agree to table that letter for the benefit of all members in this House?

The Chair: Just a little direction to the minister. It's your discretion.

[1515]

Hon. R. Neufeld: No, I won't table a letter that's not sent to me. That would be unfair, and I wouldn't think.... I'm not sure whether I should authorize the tabling of that letter at all. If the town of Creston wishes to write me a letter as Minister of Energy and Mines, they're quite welcome to do that. In fact, they can get one on the way right now if they're sitting there watching.

B. Suffredine: I have a couple of general questions. The first deals with "qualified individual." Earlier, in one of the minister's answers he indicated that a qualified individual is, of course, someone resident, but he referred to the board resourcing. How does that change who is a qualified individual? What individuals might be no longer qualified? For example, would an MLA be qualified to be a member of the board now, and if not, why not? Why would people be excluded?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Our policy through boards and resourcing is that MLAs do not sit on boards of either corporations or the Columbia Basin Trust, for instance. I know it was standard practice with the last administration. In fact, to stretch it a little bit, the last administration would appoint the minister in charge of a Crown corporation to a board such as B.C. Hydro or ICBC.

We don't do that, because we think there are hugely qualified people in the region that can actually sit on this board unfettered by any other political affiliation — any of that — and actually make very good decisions on behalf of the people that actually live in the Columbia basin. There are a whole bunch of people out there who actually want to do that — who want to

come forward, spend their time and give us their energy and their knowledge so that we can actually have the Columbia Basin Trust run in a way that the people in the Columbia basin, I'm sure, would like to have it run.

B. Suffredine: The letter alluded to by the member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant raises the issue of whether or not there's a change to the mandate of the trust. In it, the town council apparently drew a conclusion that somehow the funds in the trust could be used as a bank account or used to pay down the deficit. Can the minister clarify whether or not there's any substance to those allegations?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, no, the assumption is incorrect. As I said in my remarks earlier and in my second reading remarks and my first reading remarks, government is not going to take away anything that the trust already has under the original Columbia Basin Trust Act. We will not be taking any money away from the Columbia Basin Trust at all. Their 50 percent proceeds from those investments that they've made in that region continue to flow to the people of the Columbia Basin Trust to be used as they see fit, to be used as they would like to have them used in their region. So, no, government's not going to use it to retire debt or anything like that — not at all.

I think I explained in my second reading remarks why we're doing what we're doing. The board's investment and program priorities will continue to be guided by the Columbia basin management plan. They have a management plan in place, one they've designed, and they will continue to be guided by that plan as they move forward.

We should know that that plan has been developed by folks in the Columbia basin — not by government and not by government influence. At least — let me put this on the record — not by this government's influence. That's probably the correct thing to say: not by this government's influence. It could have been by the last government, because they appointed MLAs and cabinet ministers to the Columbia Basin Trust, but I don't know that.

[1520]

They have a master plan that I assume they're happy with, and they'll move forward with it and continue to enjoy the money that they were promised they would get.

J. Kwan: Before I got cut off on this issue, I want to actually follow up, Mr. Chair.

Interjection.

J. Kwan: You know, for the members who are laughing — the member for Nelson-Creston, who is laughing...

The Chair: Member, can we keep to the question, please.

J. Kwan: ...about the rules. There is such a rule as letting the member finish their flow of questions before they're interrupted by another member. At least the members don't know any of the rules in this House.

The Chair: Back to section 1, please.

Interjections.

J. Kwan: Well, you know...

The Chair: Member, can we get back to section 1 and get this thing on track. Thank you.

J. Kwan: My apologies, Mr. Chair. It's a little bit hard to take. As the only member in this House, in this Legislature, asking questions — pertinent questions — to this minister and to get heckled by the government MLAs who are actually, quite frankly, breaking the tradition of this House....

The Chair: The minister takes the floor.

Point of Order

Hon. R. Neufeld: I heard heckles coming from that member when our members were asking questions. That's actually something that happens in this House. It's pretty common. It's just like she's heckling me now while I speak on a point of order. So, Mr. Chair, it's a normal procedure. I would hope we would get back to section 1, pass section 1 and get on to section 2.

The Chair: That's our intent here, so we'll go back to the member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant to continue on section 1.

Debate Continued

J. Kwan: Well, one against 77. I'm sure that's a bit tough for this minister to take.

On section 1 here I was asking the minister questions about tabling letters, and the minister said, with respect to the municipality of Creston — the letter that he has received through his colleague — that he does not intend to table that letter. Let me ask the minister this question: does he intend to respond to that letter?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I'm going to repeat this again and a little slower: the letter never came to me. The letter was not copied to me. I don't even respond to letters that are copied to me, because I'd have to have a staff of hundreds to answer those kinds of letters.

No, I won't be responding to the letter, because it didn't come to me. I mean, if the member.... She has the letter. Table it herself. Why doesn't she just table it in the House if she wants to table it? Why ask me to table a letter I didn't even receive or wasn't even copied on?

J. Kwan: That was perfect. I will make sure that the people who wrote that letter will get a copy of *Hansard* so that they know the arrogance of this minister.

There are a number of letters, Mr. Chair, that have been sent to the minister with regard to this. Many people in the Kootenays believe that the changes in this bill are in fact major changes to the management plan and as such must be put to a public meeting. Why did the minister choose not to engage the public in these changes?

Hon. R. Neufeld: We have been in discussions with the Columbia Basin Trust board for a year and a half or maybe even more — two years, I would say, by now — on a pretty constant basis. It doesn't change any way that the trust manages its money. They still have 50 percent of the proceeds. They can continue forward investing that money however they want.

We have done a fair amount of consultation. I have met with the board chair and the treasurer, I believe, on quite a number of occasions. Staff have worked closely with the board. There has been a lot of input to the changes in this bill. I would say that they actually are looking forward to these changes.

[1525]

You know, when the member talks about consultation, we actually have gone out and consulted. We went through core review. We had a process where the Columbia Basin Trust chair and people came forward with ideas about the Columbia Basin Trust and how we could actually move forward with it. We took that information. We've actually worked with people and with the board to try and design something that still represents what the Columbia Basin Trust folks want.

This bill in no way alters that, other than a few minor changes, but changing from 18 to 12.... They still have the same rights, the same management plan, the same moving forward with the plan and spending their money in the basin. I think probably the only people who don't get it would be the opposition.

J. Kwan: Well, funny how the minister says that the only person who doesn't get it would be the opposition. Maybe the city of Revelstoke doesn't get it either.

Here's a letter written on November 12 by the city of Revelstoke, signed by the mayor:

"On behalf of the city of Revelstoke, I am writing to you to request the formal adoption of Bill 79 related to the governance of the Columbia Basin Trust, but delayed until such time as there has been an opportunity for public consultation with residents of the Columbia basin.

"As you're aware, the Columbia Basin Trust was established to benefit communities in the Columbia basin and to provide benefits to residents to mitigate the effect of the flooding of large areas within the basin. The city of Revelstoke believes it is important that residents of the basin be consulted to determine how best the agency should be managed.

"Sincerely."

It is signed by the mayor of the city of Revelstoke.

Could the minister please advise: do the city of Revelstoke and the mayor of Revelstoke not get it either?

The Chair: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: I take it from the non-response from the minister that it is his opinion. He would otherwise rise up to correct me. Perhaps in his opinion, the city of Revelstoke and the mayor of Revelstoke don't get it either.

The interesting thing is it isn't the city of Revelstoke that has written about this issue. Other people have as well. Here's another letter, this one written to the Premier, and it's from the Creston Museum and Archives:

"I'm writing on behalf of the directors, volunteers and staff of the Creston and District Historical Society to share our concerns about Bill 79, regarding amendments to the Columbia Basin Trust Act. As you know, the Columbia Basin Trust is an important source of funds for many basin organizations. As funds from government continue to decline, the importance of the trust in this respect can only increase. Since the trust has until now been run by basin residents, it has done an admirable job of identifying and meeting basin needs within the scope of its mandate. We do not believe this job can be done from Victoria.

"During the debate in the Legislature when this bill came up for second reading, the government was adamant that the amendments to the Columbia Basin Trust Act would not remove control from local hands. If you are so concerned about leaving control of the Columbia Basin Trust in local hands — and, in fact, are heartily congratulating yourselves for having done so — why does the Lieutenant-Governor have the ability to decline any nominee provided by the local nominating bodies? According to section 5(3) of the amendment act, the Lieutenant-Governor merely has to decline nominees twice before being able to disregard local wishes entirely. This does not seem a suitable safeguard for keeping control of the trust in local hands.

"Furthermore, under what circumstances may the Lieutenant-Governor decline nominees provided by the local nominating bodies? Those circumstances are not spelled out in the amendment act. Why not? If you're really concerned about keeping control of the trust in local hands, you must have put a great deal of thought into what would justify removing it. Why did you not specify that justification when writing this amendment act?

"We're also concerned about the government's desire to allow the Lieutenant-Governor to remove a director of the trust at the written request of the minister. Again, under what circumstances may the minister make such a request? Does that ability not significantly undermine local control of the trust?

[1530]

"Also, why should the Lieutenant-Governor have the ability to change the term of office of any director or determine the terms or conditions of that term of office? Should this not be — is it not — spelled out in the documents creating the trust in the first place? One of your stated goals for enacting this legislation is 'to delete unnecessary requirements that are duplicated by other statutes and processes.' By including the stipulation in the amending act, are you not in fact creating one of the duplications you seek to eliminate? It is also interesting that you think duplication necessary in this instance, but not in the far more significant area of conflict of interest. Even if such a stipulation does not need to be included in the amendment act, wouldn't it be better to leave it to those local people to determine those terms and conditions? Since you want to ensure that control of the

trust remains in local hands, we certainly see the logic of this.

"Mr. Bennett states in *Hansard*, November 4, 2003, that 'it's important on a board like this that the terms of office are staggered and that they all don't come up for renewal at the same time. I mean, with a board of 12 people you would want to have two or three coming for renewal at one point and then, perhaps six months later, a few others. That's the reason why the Lieutenant-Governor has maintained that kind of flexibility around the appointments.'

"Many organizations have removed this problem simply by including in their bylaws a statement to this effect: 'The term of office for a director shall be two years except for the first year in which these bylaws are effective, in which year the term of office for half the directors shall be two years, and the term of office for half the directors shall be one year.' Why can't you include such a statement in the amendment act instead of leaving it to the Lieutenant-Governor's discretion indefinitely? Would this not be more likely to promote local control of the trust?

"I wonder why you feel it is necessary to eliminate the advisory committees. The minister states in *Hansard*, November 4, 2003, that: 'the trust board is now enabled to appoint advisory committees as required instead of on an ongoing basis, saving taxpayers unnecessary costs'. An admirable goal, but the amendment act itself simply states that section 13 of the Columbia Basin Trust Act is repealed — not amended for the better, as the minister suggests.

"Mr. Bennett — *Hansard*, Tuesday, November 4, 2003 — makes quite an issue out of the skills matrix that will be used in selecting nominees for the trust board. He states: 'Each director is expected to have an advanced understanding and a working connection with a significant number of people in the basin. There's supposed to be a multicultural component on the board and the ability to work effectively with people of all races, religions and persuasions; the ability to work effectively in a group; superior communications ability; understanding and experience with board structures and processes. They should be respected in their fields and have the ability to represent the wider perspective of the basin rather than the perspective of the appointing body.'

"These are absolutely necessary requirements for the director of an organization such as the Columbia Basin Trust. However, the amendment act states only that qualified individuals be appointed and defines qualified individuals as residents of the region. Where are all these other qualifications enshrined? Surely Columbia basin residents are capable of identifying and appointing local residents without the Lieutenant-Governor's help. Even though the qualifications of the current appointees are very high, where is it ensured that subsequent appointees will have equal credentials?

"Mr. Bennett also states: 'The three fundamentals of the trust success include invest wisely, spend wisely and engage basin residents.' If those are the three fundamentals, why are they not listed among the required skills enshrined in the trust legislation? Notice, also, that Mr. Bennett refers to the trust's success. If the residents of the Columbia basin have been able to nominate and appoint the leaders of the trust who have brought about the success in the past, surely we can be trusted to continue to do so. Why is it suddenly necessary to put these appointments solely in the hands of the Lieutenant-Governor?

"It was stated several times during the second reading debate that the board of 18 directors is unwieldy, and that is the primary reason for the reduction to 12 stipulated in the amendment act. Although this could be considered a weak reason, it is by no means invalid. But why does it follow that all the reductions have to come from among the directors appointed to represent the Columbia basin? Why is there no reduction in the number of directors representing government? If you're really serious about leaving control of the trust in local hands, why have you not made provisions for nine local representatives and three government representatives?

"The words of the Liberal government concerning the Columbia Basin Trust, as recorded in *Hansard*, appear to be very reassuring, but the legislation being enacted by the same government is not. At the risk of employing a cliché, actions do speak louder than words. Your government has repeatedly expressed concern for the heartlands and loudly declares its intention of supporting the interests of the residents of the Columbia basin. If these are more than fine words, you will match your actions to your words, take this piece of legislation off the table and fix it. Enshrine the safeguards you claim to want in the legislation — not just in carefully crafted speeches. Better yet, let the residents of the Columbia basin decide for themselves what is in their best interests. According to your own government, we have been doing that successfully for years. Let us continue. We look forward to your responses to our inquiries."

[1535]

It's signed by the manager of the Creston and District Museum and Archives. The Creston and District Museum and Archives — are they out to lunch as well?

Hon. R. Neufeld: No. I was referring to the member as being out to lunch, not anyone else.

Actually, you know, regardless of how you look at this, Mr. Chair, the members of the Columbia Basin Trust have to be within GRE, the government reporting entity. That's a fact of life. Otherwise, we could end up having to write off over \$200 million.

The world is changing. We're moving to general accounting principles, which actually bring different responsibilities onto government than we used to have. I think they're probably good responsibilities. These changes are made to represent that, but we should not forget that all the members must come from the Columbia basin, from the defined area. That includes the ones that are appointed by government and the nominees that are nominated by the regional district and the tribal council. Those people must be residents of the Columbia basin.

There is a border, an area that's in the bill, which we haven't changed. It defines the Columbia basin. So it's a bit unfair, I think, to characterize this as "government appointees will be from Victoria." No, they won't. Those six people that are appointed by government — exactly the same as there were six people appointed by government before — will be people from the basin, who actually have the basin at heart and want to move forward doing things in the basin — some of the good work they've already done and continuing on with that in their master plan. Nothing changes. We move from 18 to 12, all from the Columbia basin — none from Victoria.

J. Kwan: We'll get to the makeup of the board when we get to section 2, as the minister insisted.

I know the minister is the minister, Mr. Chair, and that this government decides what it wants to do and sets the rules in accordance to their own pleasure. But you know what? I'll respect the rules and ask the questions with respect to the makeup of the board under section 2, and I'll dispute the comments from the minister then.

Interestingly, though — about the letters that I just read on record — the city of Revelstoke and the Creston and District Museum and Archives have written to the Premier and members of this House, concerned about Bill 79. The minister just stood in this House moments ago to say that I, the opposition, am out to lunch because I oppose what this government is doing and I'm challenging this minister on what he's doing.

Well, the people who wrote these letters are also challenging what this minister is doing. They say that this bill is actually not good for the Columbia basin, that it is not good for the Kootenays and that they disagree with what this government's doing. The city of Revelstoke was very clear in saying to the government that they need to consult with the people in that community.

So let me ask the minister this question. If he says that they are not out to lunch, then why won't the minister act in accordance to the requests from these individuals?

The Chair: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: Well, the best thing for the minister to do is to simply ignore those people. That has been the approach from this government. If this government doesn't agree with members of the public, from those British Columbians who dare question their decisions, then the thing to do under this so-called consultative government is to simply ignore them. Ignore them as this minister has just done — not answer their questions, not pay any attention to them. Just ignore them. Hear no evil; see no evil. That is the approach this minister is taking with respect to the concerns — valid concerns — that have been raised by the city of Revelstoke, by the mayor of Revelstoke and by the Creston and District Museum and Archives.

[1540]

They are not the only people who have concerns with this bill, with this minister. There are many people with many concerns. I have several more letters. I'm going to wait for a moment, though, before I put those letters on the record.

The government's sacrificial lamb on this bill, I believe, is the member for Nelson-Creston. He is on record voting against his own community. It's not a first. He's not the only one. The member for Vancouver-Burrard has done so as well. Many members in this House will continue to do so. I don't doubt that for one moment, because they are the people who will just do whatever the government tells them to do, irrespective of the wishes of their constituents.

According to that member, the member for Nelson-Creston, the reason for this bill is to ensure that qualified people from the Kootenays make the decisions on the board. Well, the implication here, then, is that the current board has at least some members who are unqualified. Can the minister tell us how many of the current board members are unqualified?

Hon. R. Neufeld: The member for Nelson-Creston or the member for Vancouver-Burrard.... He actually isn't affected by this bill, but his name was brought up. The member for Nelson-Creston represents his constituents very well. I can say that confidently because I've had lots of meetings with the member for Nelson-Creston over an array of issues in the area he represents. I've met with the whole Kootenay caucus quite a number of times to make sure that what we're doing actually is representative of what those elected representatives would like to have happen in their region with the Columbia Basin Trust.

As I said before, the master plan doesn't change. The money doesn't change. The ability to spend the money doesn't change. Having the members come from the Columbia Basin Trust boundaries doesn't change. There are very few changes here. The Leader of the Opposition, I think, made remarks that we were going to take a whole bunch of things away. We're not taking anything away. We're actually allowing the Columbia Basin to empower themselves, as they were before, just with 12 members on the board instead of 18, to actually move forward and do all the things they want to do in the Columbia basin.

I believe the member for Nelson-Creston represents his constituency quite well, as do all the members that are representative in the Columbia basin. They all represent their members well. They all have been voted in, quite substantially in some cases, by people from those areas. I assume they're bringing forward the wishes of the general population. They questioned me while we were developing this, while we moved through this.

I know it's probably a different process than what the member of the opposition used to be accustomed to in the last administration, where a member would find out about something like this once the minister stood in the House. This caucus is different. We have processes that we have to work through. We have to work through committee processes to actually bring....

Interjection.

Hon. R. Neufeld: It's interesting. The member sits there and laughs about it. That's how much she thinks about actual good process, isn't it? That's what she thinks about really good process.

Interjections.

The Chair: Members, members, the minister has the floor.

Hon. R. Neufeld: We actually take these processes through committees...

Interjections.

The Chair: Members.

Interjection.

The Chair: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant, please allow the minister to continue.

[1545]

Hon. R. Neufeld: ...and talk about them at length, actually talk at length — two years with the Columbia Basin Trust board and those people. We have had lots of consultation with the people in the Columbia basin. It's just that some people in this House don't get it. In this House — that's what I'm saying. People in this House just don't get it and want to play politics with this kind of thing and try to scare people. That's fear-mongering. It's not the truth.

If you read the bill, you'll find the truth. You can scatter around it all you want, and that's what we're witnessing here today. Instead of talking about the benefits of the bill, we have someone trying to actually tear it apart and make it as though it is something it is not. This is a bill that still represents the best interests of the people in the Columbia basin.

J. Kwan: You know why I was laughing, Mr. Chair? I was laughing at the statement the minister made to suggest that the member for Nelson-Creston and those members from the Kootenays are representing their constituents. I was laughing at that notion, because you know what? The community from Nelson-Creston are saying: "Where is the MLA?" Now, they actually used the real name of the MLA, and they asked: "Where is the MLA?" There is no voice from the MLA representing them. On this issue, not only did the MLAs from the Kootenays vote against the wishes of the people, supporting their own government's wishes, but they are not representing their people by raising their concerns.

The letters that I just put on record are not from my community. They're from communities elsewhere. I don't hear the members from those communities rising up saying: "I received this letter, and people are very concerned about it." Where is the member from Revelstoke? It is the mayor of Revelstoke who has sent this letter to that member for Columbia River–Revelstoke, saying: "Hold off on Bill 79. We don't like it. Consult with us." I don't hear the MLAs rising up in this House raising their concerns, so it's left for the opposition to do that. I'm bringing forward these concerns. I'm not making them up. I'm not fabricating these things. I put the letter on the record, signed by real individuals. To just pretend — I know in the fantasy world of the minister — that somehow the government MLAs are representing the constituents is simple fantasy. It is just that.

Here's another letter — not my constituent — from a constituent from the Columbia Basin Trust community. Here's what the individual has to say:

"My mom spoke to Mr. Rushton at the MLA for Nelson-Creston's office today, who explained to her that the bill" — the bill they are referring to is Bill 79 — "would allow them to make changes in the things that the Columbia Basin Trust funds. They won't be funding any" — and I quote — "damn butterfly study that doesn't bring any money in."

"He also restated how the Columbia Basin Trust should be funding the Needles bridge. When my mom said that the Columbia Basin Trust shouldn't be funding things that the government is supposed to fund, he replied: 'Well, we're not funding the Needles bridge.'

"Several times he mentioned that projects should 'bring money in' — and 'bring money in' is in quotes. 'I'm concerned that if we don't show people evidence that indeed major changes are planned, they'll see our protest of the appointment procedure as nitpicking.'

Here's a constituent who actually went to the MLA for Nelson-Creston's office and spoke with his staff, and the staff person said that they're not funding any "damn butterfly study that doesn't bring any money in."

So the whole funding notion is centred around bringing in money. The government says: "Don't worry." The minister says: "Don't worry. Nothing will change. The decisions and all of those things will remain exactly the same." If that's the case, the question's been asked, why make the changes when nothing is broken — even if the minister suggests that the board is too big and 18 people is too unwieldy.

[1550]

From the letter that I read on the record from the Creston and District Museum and Archives, who made a suggestion that if you think 18 people is too big, well, change it. Change it to 12 with six appointments. Sorry. Let me just find exactly the wording here, because I don't want to be misrepresenting what the individual said, particularly relating to this.

The individual says that you can change the numbers by having.... Instead of the government appointing, by the Lieutenant-Governor, the members and the makeup of the board, why don't you leave it for the community to pick their own people, as it was under the Columbia Basin Trust bill, but reduce the number of people? They were wondering: "Why don't you do that?" That would still reduce the number of people on the board to address the concern about the unwieldiness of having too many people but at the same time keep the control within the community. Why doesn't the minister do that?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I want to reassure again, for quite a few times now, that members nominated by the five regional districts and the tribal council are actually people they want to have on the board, not people that we're choosing. Government gets to choose six. They're people from the basin. They're people that the Kootenay caucus, the people that are representative of the Kootenay caucus, want to have on the Columbia Basin Trust. The other six representatives are actually

people that are nominated by the specific regional districts and the tribal council.

All that authority still lies within the Columbia basin. It is not removed from the Columbia basin at all.

J. Kwan: I found the specific passage. Here's what it reads:

"It was stated several times during the second reading debate that a board of 18 directors is unwieldy, and that is the primary reason for the reduction to 12 stipulated in the amendment act. Although this could be considered a rather weak reason, it is by no means invalid — though why does it follow that all of the reductions have to come from among the directors appointed to represent the Columbia basin? Why is there no reduction in the number of directors representing government? If you are really serious about leaving control of the trust in local hands, why have you not made provisions for nine local representatives and three government representatives?"

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

Hon. R. Neufeld: Again, 18 is unwieldy. The agreement with the Columbia Basin Trust board was that we would move to 12 — six appointed by government, and the other six will be nominated by the regional districts and the tribal council and will be appointed by government. That, we think, brings the whole process into the government reporting entity, which will actually have us not write down over \$200 million this year but still have the authority in the Columbia basin to move forward and expend their funds on whatever they want to expend their funds on in the Columbia basin.

Again, I stress, and I keep stressing to the member, that the 12 people will all be people from the Columbia basin. I would hope and I would think that the decisions those 12 people make from the Columbia basin will actually be in the best interests of the people in the Columbia basin. In fact, further on we'll get to a section where there could be removal, and that's not just the Lieutenant-Governor.

So we can move forward with this, and I would like to move forward with this. I think we've given enough reassurance, through all the questions that were asked, that the people of the Columbia basin will continue to enjoy exactly what they did before, but in a much simpler and more efficient fashion.

J. Kwan: With the exception that the people from that community disagree with the minister. He may say all he wants that nothing has changed, but interestingly the people who live in that community have a different opinion. They're asking the minister this question: why has there been no reduction in the number of directors representing government?

[1555]

There are six appointed government representatives on the board — formerly with 18 people — the majority of which would be community-appointed individuals. Now, with this change, there are six to be

appointed by government. The numbers for the government-appointed individuals have not changed. Why didn't government reduce that number to address the unwieldiness of the size of the board?

The Chair: The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant on section 1.

J. Kwan: Unable to answer the question. Well, I actually suspect what the answers might be. But let me ask the minister this question first: can the minister tell the House how many of the current provincial government appointees to the board contributed money to the Liberal Party?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, I have no idea if they contributed money to the provincial party. For all I know, they might have contributed to the NDP.

J. Kwan: If the minister claims that he talks to the member for Nelson-Creston as often as he does, then the minister would have known, I presume, that one of the board appointees is actually a fellow named Ben Arcuri. You know what? Mr. Arcuri just happens to have been the campaign manager for the member for Nelson-Creston in the last election. Oh. And you know what? Ron Miles contributed to the Liberal campaign in the last election. So did Michael Rouse. More than that, I should say that Mr. Rouse is a former vice-president of Tembec, and they gave substantially to the Liberal Party. He is the former vice-president of Crestbrook Forest, which also gave substantially — some \$28,000 — to the Liberal Party. No connections there.

It just so happens that some members of the board in fact have donated to the Liberal Party, and others have worked for it — campaign manager, no less. Does the minister consider those appointments to be an acceptable level of patronage? Or is it too much or too little?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Well, that's a real interesting question, isn't it? Somebody found that a few of the six people that we appointed to the Columbia Basin Trust worked for the B.C. Liberal Party, actually gave money to the B.C. Liberal Party, and that eliminates them. It's an interesting comment, isn't it?

Maybe that member could tell me: when she was in government in 1995-96, when Ed Conroy and Jim Doyle — two previous MLAs that sat in this House, that sat in cabinet and that probably gave money to the NDP party.... I would think they probably did. They may not have. I know both of those gentlemen fairly well. But that's not patronage. This is NDP. This is where you can't do two things at one time, but this member tries to do it. You know, if you're an NDP member, you can sit on the Columbia Basin Trust, and that's just fine — right? But if you're a B.C. Liberal person that's actually worked for the party, that's actually donated to the party, then that's political patronage. Actually, it's absolutely unbelievable that this member would stand here and say those kinds of things.

The Columbia Basin Trust was created in 1995. In 1995 we had Ed Conroy and Jim Doyle. I only pick on the MLAs. I'm not going to pick on people, because I think that's unfair. I'm going to pick on the ones that were elected here at one time and that represented the area. Now, that's not patronage.

In 1996-97 we had Jim Doyle and Erda Walsh. Erda Walsh represented.... She was an MLA from the basin. Oh, that's not patronage? Oh, okay. I guess NDP-style, that's okay.

Let's go to '97-98, and all of a sudden Anne Edwards showed up. Now, Anne Edwards was a member of this House also — actually was a Minister of Energy and Mines at one time. I know Anne quite well. That was okay, because that was then and this is now. That was NDP and this is B.C. Liberal.

[1600]

Let's continue on. In 1998-99 we had Anne Edwards on there again; 1999-2000, Anne Edwards; 2000-01, Anne Edwards. You know, the list goes on and on.

I don't know the relevance of this at all, to be perfectly frank. I'm not sure about the relevance of this discussion about those people. You know what? Those people were from the Kootenays. Those people had the Kootenays at heart. Those people lived in the Columbia basin. They wanted the best for the folks in the Columbia basin. Not once did this government ever say.... Let me correct this. Not once did I — because I'm speaking for myself — ever say publicly that any one of those people should not be on the Columbia Basin Trust.

What I am saying is that we move forward now. Those six members.... I want to thank them publicly for allowing their names to stand, even with members of the opposition calling them stooges — which I think is totally unfair. These people are knowledgeable about the Kootenays. They've lived in the Kootenays. They make their lives in the Kootenays. They raise their children in the Kootenays. They have the Kootenays at heart. Because they happen to belong to a certain political party should play no part in it at all, the same as prior to when we were in government.

Now, the last government chose to appoint elected representatives. There is a clear distinction here. We have said in this government that we will not appoint elected representatives to boards. I've said it before, and I'm going to say it again. That is because there is a whole host of people out there who live in the Columbia basin and are very bright and very wise and have the Columbia basin at heart. They want to see those funds expended in the Columbia basin under the plan that's there, that's not changed, that's moving forward and actually looking after the interests of the people in the Columbia basin.

J. Kwan: I just want to set the record straight for this minister's information. Yes, the MLAs that were appointed under the former board were government appointees, but you know what? You have to note the fact that there were 18 people on that board. Only six were government-appointed individuals, and some of them were MLAs. The majority of them were ap-

pointed by the community. You know what, Mr. Chair? Anne Edwards was appointed by the community, by the regional district, not by the government.

The change in this legislation speaks right to the heart of the issue here. The people this government has picked on the board, at least the ones I have mentioned here, just happen — by coincidence, Mr. Chair — to have donated substantially to the Liberal Party, to have actually worked as a campaign manager for the MLA for Nelson-Creston. Just a coincidence. Nothing untoward there.

When I mentioned the issue around stooges, Mr. Chair — I want to clarify it for the record — I meant the government MLAs who sit around this bench, who will not rise up to represent their community. That is the issue.

The Chair: Member, that is absolutely unparliamentary language. I'll ask you to withdraw it.

J. Kwan: You know, the minister, Mr. Chair....

The Chair: Member, I will ask you to withdraw that statement. That is an absolutely unparliamentary statement — to call a member of this House that particular name. I'll ask you to withdraw it, please.

J. Kwan: Okay, Mr. Chair. Maybe they're not stooges. Already my colleague....

The Chair: Member, please take your seat. I'll ask you to withdraw that statement.

J. Kwan: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will withdraw that. You know what? My colleague the opposition leader has already been challenged by the Speaker today for challenging the Premier on an issue.

The Chair: Member, member. You know the rules of this House. You know that certain language is not accepted in this House.

J. Kwan: I withdraw.

The Chair: The member formally was asked to withdraw for stating unparliamentary language. I'm asking you now to proceed with the debate. We are dealing with section 1, and I'll ask you to be relevant to section 1.

J. Kwan: Well, I withdraw.

The Chair: Member, I think we've had....

J. Kwan: I withdraw, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Member, just take your seat, please. We usually give a lot of latitude in section 1, and I think we've gone beyond that point at this point. I'd ask you now to focus your questioning on section 1 and only section 1.

[1605]

J. Kwan: Well, section 1 deals with what the minister likes to call qualified people — qualified people under the definitions of section 1 to be appointed to the board. I was asking questions of the minister around who was qualified and who was not qualified and about the people who donated to the Liberal Party, the people who worked on the campaign — as the campaign manager for the member for Nelson-Creston in the last election — whether or not those individuals are qualified or not qualified and whether or not those are patronage appointments or not. It was the minister who claimed that I called people stooges, and I want it to be clear on the record who I was referring to in that regard, Mr. Chair.

Just so that we know what was said in this House — and I know this Liberal government has the majority, and they can threaten and heckle and intimidate all they want. Already the Leader of the Opposition, by challenging the Premier in question period today, is not allowed in this chamber. I am the only opposition member, along with the independent member for Prince George-Omineca, who may raise questions to challenge this government.

Perhaps this government and this minister and the MLAs around the government bench would like to see complete silence on questions raised for this government. Under a critical bill that will change the face and the makeup of the Columbia Basin Trust, that will undermine the control of the Columbia Basin Trust and that will take away the control from local authorities, the government decides to do that under the auspices that the board is somehow too big and unwieldy.

Community members have written to the Premier asking a simple and valid question: why did the Premier, the government and the minister not reduce the government-appointed MLAs or the government-appointed members on the trust — reduce those numbers from six to three or two, let's say — rather than reducing the community-appointed individuals? Why didn't they do that if the issue is about the size of the board? Or is the issue about qualifications? It just so happens that a number of the people sitting on that board appointed by this government happen to have donated to the Liberal Party, happen to have worked as a campaign manager, no less, for a Liberal MLA.

Maybe it's just a coincidence, Mr. Chair. Silly me. Why would I ask such questions? You know, it's fascinating, though, because the minister refuses to answer the question. He refuses to answer the question.

The minister also says that the changes are necessary, because they'll clarify "issues of ownership and control as they relate to the new accounting standards to ensure that auditors continue to include government's investments in the trust in government's summary accounts." It is my understanding, Mr. Chair, that this implied lack of clarity stems from a difference of opinion between the comptroller general, who is responsible for the summary financial statements, and the auditor general, who is responsible for the overall accounting practices of government. This dispute pre-

dates this government. I'm not implying that this minister has picked sides in this debate, but I have not seen a written explanation from either the comptroller general or the auditor general as to just what is at issue here. It is this dispute amongst accountants that is the justification for the changes being made to the board of the trust by this bill.

So will the minister, hon. Chair, table any opinions that he has from the comptroller general or the auditor general on the issue of accounting for government investments in the summary accounts?

[1610]

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, nobody is trying to undermine the control in the Kootenays — none whatsoever. We're trying to leave the control in the Kootenays. I've said that consistently from the start. We actually have worked that through with the Columbia Basin Trust board, so there's no desire to do that.

The entity actually has been and, with this, will actually be in the GRE, the government reporting entity. We want to make sure of that for the simple fact that we don't want to write off over \$200 million for no reason. This is simply to adapt to the GAAP — the generally accepted accounting principles — and to the reporting entity. That's what we're trying to do here. It's pretty straightforward.

All 12 members will continue to come from the basin, exactly as they did before. They'll be absolutely no different than before. They will still expend their 50 percent proceeds that they get from the investments in the Columbia basin. They'll be able to spend that money in the Columbia basin however they see fit.

There was a statement made about Anne Edwards — and Anne Edwards I know quite well — being appointed by the regional district. You could actually go to the March 31, 1988, annual financial report and see the name "Anne Edwards, province of British Columbia." I just wanted to put that correction on the record so that people understand, instead of someone flailing out with information they don't really have, that this member — as of that date — was appointed by the previous administration. That's just a matter of correcting the record.

J. Kwan: Just a matter of correcting the record. Anne Edwards was picked by the regional district, Mr. Chair — just so there's no misunderstanding or confusion about that — and it's a community representative. The government can keep on saying and this minister can keep on saying all he wants that nothing has changed and that the community control is still there.

Funny how the community doesn't think so, because as I stated, it isn't just the opposition that thinks that. Other people think that too. Well, here's another letter, and let me put the issues raised by the city of Nelson on the record for the minister. A resolution that was passed unanimously by the Nelson city council on November 17, 2003:

"Whereas section 2 of the Columbia Basin Trust Amendment Act, Bill 79, replaces local government

power to appoint Columbia Basin Trust board members with an opportunity to nominate candidates for the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council's selection; and

"Whereas under Bill 79 the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council may decline any nomination from a local nominating committee; and

"Whereas the L-G-in-C may, 'remove any director after receiving a written request to do so from (a) the minister or (b) the board of directors;' and

"Whereas the above diminishes the Columbia basin communities' power to determine their representatives to the Columbia Basin Trust; and

"Whereas section 5 of Bill 79 removes specified public accountability from the board of directors;

"Therefore be it resolved that the city of Nelson:

"immediately urges the provincial government to delay third reading of Bill 79 until proper community consultation is completed;

"immediately convey to the UBCM our concern about the lack of provincial consultation with them, as would be appropriate under the protocol agreement between the province and the UBCM;

"urge the provincial government and the Columbia Basin Trust board of directors to work toward creating the trust as an independent entity with the power to appoint its own directors, but operating in accountable partnership with the provincial government as well as with other governments and entities; and

"reaffirms that all assets and revenues of the trust should remain in the basin under the management of the Columbia Basin Trust.

"And further that this resolution be copied to all local governments in the Columbia basin, to the AKBM for information, and to the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce."

So, Mr. Chair....

The Chair: Pardon me, hon. member. That letter refers to section 2. Would that question better be presented in section 2, rather than in section 1?

J. Kwan: Well, actually, the letter refers to a number of different sections — section 2, section 5....

The Chair: Well, member, it certainly doesn't refer to section 1, so I think we should probably move on.

J. Kwan: Mr. Chair, I'm not finished asking questions under section 1.

The Chair: Member, you are referring to section 2 in that letter. I just want to clarify that.

[1615]

J. Kwan: Well, then I'll make the relevance in this letter and put the question to the minister as it relates to section 1. Section 1 deals with what the minister calls qualified people to be appointed to the board. Broadly speaking, there are issues around consultation with respect to Bill 79 and the consultation process that this minister and this government have not undertaken. One of the issues that has been raised by the Nelson city council pertains to consultation. It is the view of the Nelson city council that this government has not

done the appropriate consultation per the UBCM protocol agreement between the province and the UBCM. They're asking the government to delay third reading of Bill 79. Well, I'd like the response of the minister on that.

Hon. R. Neufeld: Yes, we have carried on two years of consultation with the Columbia Basin Trust — at length with people on the Columbia Basin Trust — through both the ministry and people that are sitting here in the House with me and actually through myself. Members elected in the Columbia Basin Trust area have had lots of consultation with folks in the area. I think we've done a fair consultative process in the region to make sure that we, again, have people from the region that are going to be representative of the region.

I believe that the six we appointed just recently.... It's our prerogative to appoint those six. They come from the region. They're recommended by the people from the region. I think we should be quite happy that people want to step forward and spend the time it takes to actually do the job of what they're challenged with. We want to be able to maintain that and continue on. People will still be able to do the same thing. I keep saying that time and time again. Actually, all 12 will come from the region, similar to what happened when she was part of a government that was in the administration.

The difference is that there are 12 instead of 18. Another clear difference is that there are no MLAs elected to the House who sit on that board at the same time. There are people from the region that actually want to do that work. I'm pretty happy that those six people and the other people sitting on the board are sitting there, doing the work they should be doing for the Columbia basin residents. We should be happy and thankful they're there, and we should be thanking them daily, not berating them for who they are.

Mr. Chair, I just want to table a document, just to put the record straight in regard to Anne Edwards. This is from the annual report, 1997-98, March 31, Anne Edwards, province of British Columbia. She was appointed to the Columbia Basin Trust to represent the province of British Columbia. Just so there's no mistake, I'll table that part of the annual report.

The Chair: Just for the information of the House, you are unable to table documents during committee.

[1620]

J. Kwan: Learning the rules of the House — important for the minister.

The minister himself raised the issues around the makeup of the board. One crucial difference he forgot to highlight is that with this bill, Bill 79, the majority of the board appointed by the community would no longer exist.

That, in some people's minds, the community's mind.... Many of the folks in the Nelson-Creston region, in the Kootenays region, the Columbia Basin Trust constituents, people from the Creston and District Museum

and Archives, and the city of Revelstoke, amongst others, raised the concern of this substantive change.

The minister can ignore their concerns all he wants, but it does not change the fact that this legislation changes the makeup of the board, taking away the balance of power that resides with the community under the Columbia Basin Trust Act. By that change, the balance of control is taken away from the community. That is the reality.

That's what the community is saying. That's their concern, and they are asking for this government to set aside committee stage debate on Bill 79. I'll come back, Mr. Chair, to these questions around the makeup of the board.

I asked the minister if he has received any written information or opinions from the comptroller general or the auditor general on the issue of accounting for government investments in the summary accounts.

Hon. R. Neufeld: Yes, we have received advice from the comptroller general that this is necessary so that, actually, the Columbia Basin Trust stays within GRE.

J. Kwan: Will the minister table that information at the end of committee for the benefit of all members of the House?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I just tabled it.

J. Kwan: I asked for written information.

Hon. R. Neufeld: I can't table anything. I have just said that it's the advice we received. I don't have any documentation to table.

J. Kwan: The minister has received no written information from the auditor general or the comptroller general pertaining to this. Am I understanding this correctly?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Wrong.

J. Kwan: So then the question is on the written information that the minister did receive from the auditor general or the comptroller general on this: will the minister provide that written information to the members of the House?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Again, I said we have received advice. Actually, this government responds to advice from the comptroller general and the auditor general. Now, the last administration may not have. We actually do. That's why those people are there. It's to give us advice. I said we actually got advice that this is what we should do. This in no way changes, for the people of the Columbia basin, what benefits they get out of the Columbia Basin Trust.

[1625]

J. Kwan: No. The question I asked the minister.... I'll say this slowly for the minister. It is my understand-

ing that the implied lack of clarity stems from a difference, and the issue around clarity is this. I quote the minister with his own words: "The changes will also clarify issues of ownership and control as they relate to new accounting standards to ensure that auditors continue to include government's investments in the trust in government summary accounts." The issue around the implied lack of clarity stems from a difference of opinion between the comptroller general and the auditor general. The comptroller general is responsible for the summary financial statements, and the auditor general is responsible for the overall accounting practices of government.

This dispute, I want to say very clearly, predates this government, so I'm not implying that this minister is picking sides on this debate. All I'm asking for is the written information that he's received from either the auditor general or the comptroller general on this issue and for him to make available that information to all members of the House — not just what this minister says, but the written information that he's received. He says that he takes advice from the auditor general and the comptroller general. Great. Well, will he table the written information for the benefit of all members of the House?

The Chair: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: Well, I don't know what the minister is trying to hide. He says that he takes advice from both the auditor general and the comptroller general, and I'm asking a general question. Why won't he then share that information with all members of the House, so that we can see for ourselves what the issues are and then the resolution that the government decided to address those concerns, and not just take this minister's word for it? You'll pardon me, Mr. Chair, because, quite frankly, I don't trust it. I want to see the written information. But he won't even rise up in this House to answer the question on whether or not he'll table the written information. Then he leaves the question in the people's minds.... It begs the question: what is he trying to hide?

Let me ask the minister this question. The third general matter that I'd like to raise also stems from what the minister said when this bill was introduced. At that time, the minister said: "The government remains committed to supporting the work of the trust and to providing ongoing funding for local power projects that benefit the region." As was noted by the Leader of the Opposition during second reading stage, the trust spent about \$4 million in the last fiscal year on the non-power projects in the fulfilment of its mandate.

When the minister's statement about appropriate spending by the trust is taken in conjunction with the statement made by the minister about the mandate of the trust, it does appear that the government views the only role of the trust as that relating to the local power projects and not those other activities listed in section 4 of the act. Question: what assurances can the minister

provide that the real purpose of this bill is not to set the stage for the effective amalgamation of the trust and the Columbia Power Corporation to the detriment of the activities of the trust?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Nothing in this bill is to the detriment of the trust — absolutely nothing. I've said that consistently now for well over an hour. This bill still respects all the rights and privileges of the Columbia Basin Trust. They will still be able to expend their 50 percent share of proceeds from investments that they make in the Columbia basin on whatever they want to spend that money on. This bill doesn't change that in any way, shape or form. In fact, there will be 12 really excellent members of that board who will make sure that takes place.

J. Kwan: Will the minister put on record that he will not amalgamate or this government will not amalgamate the trust and the Columbia Power Corporation?

Hon. R. Neufeld: That's a totally irrelevant question. It's got nothing to do with section 1. I think we should get back on section 1 and deal with section 1.

J. Kwan: Well, the concerns people have raised.... They want assurances from this government and this minister that the real purpose of this bill is not to set the stage for the effective amalgamation of the trust and the Columbia Power Corporation. The minister gets up and claims that for the last hour he's stood in this House, saying that he will protect the trust. Well, one of the fundamental issues around protection of the trust is that he will not amalgamate the trust and the Columbia Power Corporation. Well, give that assurance to the people. Why won't he do that? Unless, of course, the people should have something to fear.

[1630]

Hon. R. Neufeld: It's not relevant at all to the discussion around section 1 of this bill.

J. Kwan: So the minister will not give the assurance to the people. He gets up and says: "Don't worry; be happy." It's sort of like the Minister of Human Resources to all the welfare recipients that he's going to kick off come the next fiscal year: "Don't worry; just be happy." This minister says the same about the Columbia Basin Trust.

When constituents of the member for Nelson-Creston asked his office for an explanation of the purpose of this bill, they are told that it is to move the focus of the trust from community-supporting activities to moneymaking activities, including financing the Needles bridge. But it was just this kind of provincial responsibility that this minister argued a decade ago should not be the responsibility of the trust.

Here's what the member for Nelson-Creston said: "I'd like to see a board that focuses not on politics and patronage like might be alleged, but on which regions

have been affected the worst and how we can help fix the problem. The Nakusp region is a great example of.... Well, for example, the Needles bridge wasn't built. The trust took the view that it wasn't there to do jobs that government could have done. I took a little bit of a different view. I took the view that the trust potentially could have built the Needles bridge and sold it back to government, and that would not have been replacing the function of government."

Is the member for Nelson-Creston correct? Is it the government's intention to push provincial projects like the Needles bridge onto the trust?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Again, there will be 12 members from the Columbia basin who will be making all these decisions for people that they represent in the Columbia basin for their best interests. I'm not going to hypothetically pick on anything — a Needles bridge or anything like that.

What happens is that group will make decisions under a Columbia basin management plan that they have in place and that's been in place under the last administration. That doesn't change under this administration. They will still make their decision surrounding how they want to invest their 50 percent share of their moneys that they receive from investments in the Columbia basin in whatever they deem fit that they want it to be invested in. That's what we'll actually ask the board to do. It will be the same as before. They will make decisions for the benefit of the Columbia basin.

J. Kwan: With the exception of a fundamental change, which we'll get to under section 2, and that is the makeup of the board. Where formerly the majority of the board would be appointed by the community, that will no longer be in place. That will no longer be in place after Bill 79 passes.

The minister had said in this House how wonderful the member for Nelson-Creston has been in going into his office and advocating for his community on this issue. Well, he is actually on record saying that the trust should be doing the Needles bridge. In fact, his office told a constituent: "The trust should be doing projects that bring in the money." That's what the member for Nelson-Creston's office told a constituent. That "damn butterfly study that doesn't bring in any money" won't be getting any funding. That's what the staff of the member for Nelson-Creston said.

Given that the makeup of the board is no longer going to be substantively in majority by the community, is the intention here to push through projects that will only bring in money, as the staff from the member for Nelson-Creston said to a constituent of his? Or is the intention to push through provincial projects such as the one example, the Needles project?

[1635]

The minister refuses to answer the question. You know what? All he does by not answering the questions, giving the reassurances to the community, is reaffirm the concerns that they've raised. The minister says that he has consulted with the public. Funny how

it is that mayors of communities and community individuals from the region write letters to the Premier, to the MLA raising these concerns. Funny how they say we need more consultation and that they have not been consulted, and that in fact this government is ramming Bill 79 through without consulting with the people that are most affected and, in fact, is breaching the protocol agreement that was signed by this government and the UBCM. So much for consultation.

Section 1 approved.

On section 2.

The Chair: On section 2 there's an amendment from the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke. We'll deal with that amendment first.

W. McMahon: I move:

[That section 2 be amended by replacing the words "at least 2 and not more than 4" with the words "at least 1 and not more than 4."]

The board of the Columbia Basin Trust has indicated they would like an amendment to section 2 of the act, and in discussions with my colleagues in Kootenay caucus and in consultation with the minister and his staff, this amendment is consistent with the wishes of the board and the citizens of the basin. I think it's a clear indication that we've been flexible and that we are listening, as is our executive branch, who are being respectful of the concerns that have been expressed.

On the amendment.

J. Kwan: I just received the amendment, so I'm just going through in the act here where it pertains to: "That section 2 be replacing the words 'at least 2 and not more than 4' with the words 'at least 1 and not more than 4.'" That would be in section 2(b).

Am I correct in understanding that's in section 2(b)? So then the wording would read: "The nominating body is, within 60 days after that notification, to provide to the Lieutenant Governor in Council a list of at least 2 and not more than 4..." That phrase there, to replace it with "at least 1 and not more than 4 nominees who are qualified individuals..." Am I correct in understanding this is where the amendment applies?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I'll explain it a little bit more. You're correct. If you go down to section 6, it also talks about two and four, so it amends that one also. This is all in section 2, by the way — section 6 and go to 8. It refers to two to four, and it amends that from one to four.

Subsection 8(2)(b) says from two to four and actually goes from one to four. That's all in section 2. They're all the same changes. All they are is repetitive.

J. Kwan: Effectively, in all the relevant sections where it refers to at least two and not more than four

nominees, those are being changed to the words "at least 1 and not more than 4."

Substantively, though, in terms of the changes in this bill, the appointments would still be by the Lieutenant-Governor. It doesn't change that. Instead of the Lieutenant-Governor choosing a minimum of two, it could actually go down to one.

I didn't catch from the member who proposed the amendment.... Who did she say, Mr. Chair, the request came from?

Hon. R. Neufeld: From the Columbia Basin Trust board.

J. Kwan: Well, I'm not sure what the premise is. Could the minister please then explain what the premise is by changing the number of people from two to one?

Hon. R. Neufeld: I believe we had a letter from Mr. Smienk in regard to this, from the board. They had a discussion, and apparently it was, as I understand, a unanimous decision by the board that they would like to have the option of maybe just nominating one person instead of a minimum of two.

[1640]

I don't have any problem with that. All we're doing is asking for a good matrix of people. They can either appoint one, each one of the regional districts and the tribal council, or they can.... Not appoint. They can recommend one or up to a maximum of four. Board resourcing then will take those names from each of those areas and put that together with a matrix of all of the people on the board so we get a good cross-section of people on the board to administer it. It's a wish of the board that we reduce that from two to one, and we're fine with doing that.

J. Kwan: Well, the minister mentioned the issue around matrix. I'll ask him a question around this notion of a matrix in a few moments.

Would the minister provide the written information from the board so that the opposition actually have a chance to examine this before the vote on the amendment is called?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Again, it is a request from the board of the Columbia Basin Trust, and we're actually responding to the Columbia Basin Trust to do their wishes.

B. Bennett: Mr. Chair, could I speak in favour of the amendment?

The Chair: We are speaking to the amendment, yes.

B. Bennett: I've been in my office watching this and listening to this and listening, unfortunately, to the member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant mispronounce the names of the people on the Columbia Basin Trust board and not realize that Tembec is not "Tembic." It's

Tembec. Crestbrook was actually the company that came before Tembec. Tembec purchased Crestbrook. She was thinking there were two different appointments to the trust when there was really only one person involved.

Just listening to the member talk about how the MLAs from the Kootenays — and I'm going to use her language — ignore their constituents, I couldn't help but think about how we were ignored for ten years by the government that the member was a member of. They totally ignored us in the forest industry. They brought about land use plans that put thousands of people out of work. They passed a grizzly bear hunting moratorium just prior to the last election against the wishes of the vast majority of the people who live there.

Interjection.

B. Bennett: The member thinks it's funny, because she thinks people that live in rural B.C. are funny.

She also was a member of a government that refused for ten years to allow a coal-fired power plant to go forward in my riding despite the fact that the vast majority of people in my riding wanted it. They ignored the people in the Kootenays for ten years, so it's really difficult for me to sit here and listen to the member talk about how the MLAs today are ostensibly ignoring their constituents.

In fact, the amendments that are proposed are a direct response to the people of the Columbia basin. The board of the Columbia Basin Trust, all 18 of them, unanimously recommended that we make these changes. We have listened to them. I'm very appreciative of the fact that the minister involved here listened to the Columbia Basin Trust board, all 18 members, and that we're going to respond in a flexible, positive way to the people of the Columbia basin by making these amendments.

I strongly support these amendments. They are what the people in my region have asked for, and we are complying.

B. Suffredine: I also, of course, support the amendment. I discussed it with the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke before she presented it, and I was aware of the request from the board. Just for clarity, can the minister, on this amendment, tell us...? I know there was a real perception out there that because the section as originally drafted asked for a minimum of two names and a maximum of four.... Would this actually change in any way whether or not he's likely to accept or reject any candidate? I know allowing them to present just one is going to put their minds at ease that they get to pick that person. Could they have picked their people before? Would it have changed it in any way?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Actually, I don't have any problem responding to their request of putting forward one name. It changes nothing, actually, as far as I'm con-

cerned, because they were going to put forward either two to four so there was a range of people to pick from. That's what we wanted to be sure of.

[1645]

We'll go by the wishes of the regional districts, and they'll appoint their names. There are sections further on in the bill that say the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council still has the authority not to appoint if they don't wish and to ask for further names. That could be the case. I don't know what will happen as we move forward.

J. Kwan: It's interesting, you know. The members from the Kootenays are saying: "Hey. You know, we listen to the people." There was a town hall meeting most recently where 125 people attended. At this town hall meeting there were three mayors. There were three mayors there. There were many councillors and regional district directors there, including a councillor in Castlegar who was a member of the UBCM executive.

At this meeting people actually passed two resolutions. One called for the removal of the trust from provincial government control, and the second called for the delay of third reading of the bill to allow people in the basin to respond.

The Chair: Hon. member, are you speaking to the amendment?

J. Kwan: I am speaking to the amendment, Mr. Chair, and pertaining to the entire bill. We're talking about changing the numbers from two to one in terms of the relevant areas under this section — and relatively speaking, per the member for East Kootenay, who rose up and said that he will stand and represent his community relating to this amendment. He went on and on about stuff related to that.

Well, the community had a town hall meeting in the region, and 125 people attended and voted to say: "Delay the passage of third reading including this amendment." They say: "Delay third reading passage." They tell the government not to provide for a provision that would put the trust in the control of the provincial government. So much for listening to the people, because the member for East Kootenay and the member for Nelson-Creston simply refuse to acknowledge them.

Then on this amendment. It's interesting. The minister just rose up in this House and said: "Well, okay. I agree with that amendment." The trust may ask for the change from two to one in the relevant areas, but the government can choose not to appoint that one person if one name has been submitted. The government can say: "Submit another name. We don't like it." The government can go through this whole process of saying: "Submit names all you want, but at the end of the day" — and that's the crux of the issue — "we the government, the minister, will choose who we want. You will not choose who we want. The government will make that decision, and if we don't like the name that you

put forward, we will throw it out. You can put forward another one, and then we can consider it."

The process will go on and on and on. At the end of the day, what that means is that the control of the people on this board falls into the hands of this government with the six government-appointed representatives. Because the change in the section takes away the majority of the representation from the community, the community will no longer have control of the board. Whether the board submits one name or two names, it almost doesn't matter because the government — this minister — can say: "I don't like it. We're not going to appoint that person. You can submit it, but we don't like it. Tell the board to submit another name." What difference does it make if it's one name or two names?

Amendment approved.

On section 2 as amended.

J. Kwan: Let's get to section 2. The changes are around the employment process so that there is only one board member instead of two from each of the five regional districts and the tribal council. All are to be approved and directly appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council. The claim is that this is needed to ensure the skills matrix and to satisfy the line of accountability in the post-Enron era.

[1650]

Let me ask the minister, first of all, a question about this notion of a skills matrix as it relates to the appointment of these board members. What are the elements in this matrix? Is this the same as the popular movie in which the matrix is an artificially constructed design to keep people occupied while the Liberal machine takes over the world? Is this the matrix that the minister is thinking about, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: Well, then why is — if this skills matrix is actually something real — the skills matrix not included in the definition section, which was just passed under section 1? Why doesn't the government define that in terms of what this notion of skills matrix is as it applies to the appointments under section 2?

W. McMahon: I would like some clarification from the minister, if I could, please. I believe that the Columbia Basin Trust has a board policy in place that states what the skills matrix will be for the members of the basin that will serve on the board. Could you clarify that for me?

Hon. R. Neufeld: They are actually on the website. The board's skills matrix is there to view. What we want to do is make sure that when we appoint boards, we don't just do this with the Columbia Basin Trust. We actually do it with all the boards across the province that we're responsible for. It is to get people with

different qualifications so you actually have a good representative board that can deal with all the issues that they have to deal with in today's world, which is probably a little bit different than it was a number of years ago.

So that's all a matrix is about. It is to try and make sure that we get the right people that can actually be very beneficial for the people, in this case, of the Columbia basin.

J. Kwan: It's interesting. The notion of this skills matrix is not in the definition under section 1. The government says: "Well, you know, it's just so that all the qualified people are there." As acknowledged by the government, the current board is actually operating very well. Well then, why change it? Is he saying that the people representing this board are not qualified — that they haven't met the skills matrix definitions, as the minister has in his own mind? Is that why the change is required? Is that why we have this bill before us, Mr. Chair?

Hon. R. Neufeld: It was the member that called all board members on the Columbia Basin Trust stooges a while ago — not me. I have actually talked....

Interjections.

The Chair: Order, please. Order.

Hon. R. Neufeld: I have actually given praise to all the members on the Columbia Basin Trust, right from the conception to now, because we should be thankful that there are people out there who will do that kind of work. What we want to do is make sure that we get the best people for the job.

J. Kwan: Interesting. Well, then let me ask the minister this question. I just want to be clear on the record. The minister keeps on accusing me of calling the appointees stooges. I didn't do that. I was referring to other people, other people that happen to be sitting around the benches in the chamber.

But let me ask the minister this question: are MLAs consulted by the board resourcing and development office when appointments are made to various boards?

Sorry, Mr. Chair. I didn't hear an answer. It's a simple question to the minister. Are MLAs consulted when the government's board resourcing and development office makes appointments to various boards? Are MLAs consulted? Simple question.

Hon. R. Neufeld: You know, I've answered, I think, 100 questions on the makeup of the board. I've given all those answers. I've said that people go out — MLAs and others — and bring forward names, and it's given to the board resourcing. They actually go through it and make some recommendations to us.

[1655]

I don't know if the member is unfamiliar with that type of process, which I think is a good process. Maybe

they were used to going through the phone book. I'm not exactly sure, but that's exactly how we do it. We actually go and ask MLAs to ask people to sit on these boards and get those names. There might be other names that came forward, because there are a lot of names in board resourcing that may have ended up on there. I don't know.

J. Kwan: You know, the minister is so full of himself in arrogance in his approach to questions from the opposition that it's unbelievable. He can't stand the fact that the opposition has questions. There's only one opposition member asking questions, but even then he can't stand that. I know this government would like to have no opposition members, and they're doing all they can to make that happen, so I will continue to ask questions. It is my job to do that as the opposition member. If the Leader of the Opposition was able to do it, I know she would too, because these are of pertinent importance to the people of British Columbia and particularly to those in the Columbia Basin Trust region.

It was interesting. The existing board member, the name that I put forward earlier, happens to have donated to the Liberal Party and happens to have been the campaign manager for a Liberal MLA, the member for Nelson-Creston. Those, of course, are important parts of, I suppose, the skills matrix for consideration in terms of appointments.

Let me ask the minister this question. The minister is changing the very nature of the trust by removing the very real sense of ownership the people in the Columbia basin have with the trust by changing the makeup of the people for that trust. The minister says it is because 18 people is too unwieldy. As I mentioned earlier, you can change the number of representation by reducing the number of government appointments. Why doesn't the government, the minister, change the six appointed members from government to reduce the number of the trust?

Interjection.

J. Kwan: That's the approach the minister has taken: ignore the questions. Ignore the questions of the public. Don't answer them. That's the way to go. How can anyone have any confidence that these changes are not about the government taking over the direction of the trust when it is the government and the minister that approve, appoint and dismiss members of the board?

Mr. Chair, on a point of order. I'm perplexed as to how the minister can answer questions when he — and pardon me, Mr. Chair, for violating this rule — has just left the chamber. I don't know how he can answer the questions from the opposition. In light of that, perhaps we should take a 15-minute break, and then we'll resume when the minister returns.

The Chair: We will take a five-minute recess.

The committee recessed from 4:59 p.m. to 5:04 p.m.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

On section 2 as amended (*continued*).

J. Kwan: Just before the recess I was asking the minister: how can anyone have any confidence that these changes are not about the government taking over the direction of the trust, when it is the government and the minister that approve, appoint and dismiss members of the board?

[1705]

Hon. R. Neufeld: I've reassured the member a number of times that the board will be made up of 12 people from the Columbia Basin Trust area who, I'm sure, will have the best interests of the Columbia basin and those people that live in that basin at heart when they make their decisions on what they're going to do.

J. Kwan: But the issue is this. It is the government who makes those appointments. It's the government who dismisses those appointments. It is the government who will ultimately decide the makeup of the board. We just passed an amendment, Mr. Chair, and by the minister's own admission, when the trust forwards a name, if he doesn't like that name, he could say: "We don't like that name. Put up another name." Then in that process of selection, the government will choose who they want on the board.

The control does not rest with the people. It doesn't. That's the fundamental change from the old act, the Columbia Basin Trust Act, versus Bill 79, the Columbia Basin Trust Amendment Act, 2003. If the government is true to its principles of saying they will give the control of the board to the community, then why wouldn't the government put forward a board makeup that consists of the majority of the people from the community, as was formerly the case?

Hon. R. Neufeld: It is still the case. The people are still from the Columbia basin. They're still recommended, actually, by the regional district of Central Kootenay, the Fraser-Fort George regional district, the Columbia-Shuswap regional district, the Kootenay-Boundary regional district, the East Kootenay regional district and the tribal council. They are still people that are recommended by them. The other six that the government appoints are actually people that come out of the region.

Maybe the member doesn't know, but you can actually put your name in to sit on boards through board resourcing, through the website. They have actually been commended for the good work they've done in the past and how they go about appointing people to boards and commissions. I think it's a good system. It sure beats the telephone book system we had for ten years while that member was in government.

Also, I want to correct something. The member said it's just the minister that can remove people from the board. Actually, that's not so. So can the board. By written request to the minister, it can actually remove someone from the board.

J. Kwan: Well, no. There's a major difference between what is being proposed under Bill 79 versus what was in the Columbia Basin Trust Act. Let me just put on the record in its entirety the language in terms of the appointment, because it makes a fundamental difference when you listen and see what the language is in this legislation under Bill 79.

Section 5 reads:

"5 (1) The Lieutenant Governor in Council is to appoint, as the board of directors of the corporation, 12 qualified individuals of whom

"(a) one is to be appointed from the nominees provided under section 6 by the board of the Regional District of Central Kootenay,

"(b) one is to be appointed from the nominees provided under section 6 by the board of the Fraser-Fort George Regional District,

"(c) one is to be appointed from the nominees provided under section 6 by the board of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District,

"(d) one is to be appointed from the nominees provided under section 6 by the board of the Kootenay Boundary Regional District,

"(e) one is to be appointed from the nominees provided under section 6 by the board of the East Kootenay Regional District, and

"(f) one is to be appointed from the nominees provided under section 6 by the tribal council."

[1710]

Then it goes on to read:

"(2) Despite subsection (1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may decline to appoint any of the nominees provided by a nominating body and, in that event,

"(a) the minister must notify the nominating body of the Lieutenant Governor in Council's decision, and

"(b) the nominating body is, within 60 days after that notification, to provide to the Lieutenant Governor in Council a list of " — at least one and — "not more than 4 nominees who are qualified individuals.

"(3) If a nominating body does not comply with subsection (2) (b), or if the Lieutenant Governor in Council declines to appoint any of the nominees provided by the nominating body under that subsection, the Lieutenant Governor in Council is to appoint a qualified individual as director, and that director is deemed to be appointed from nominees of that nominating body provided under section 6.

(4) No act or proceeding of the directors is invalid merely because the composition of the board does not accord with subsection (1)."

Let me just stop there, because there are more sections relating to this. The fundamental change here is that instead of two people appointed from each of the regional districts, only one would be — shrinking the number of representatives from the various regional districts to six from 12, which was formerly put in the Columbia Basin Trust Act.

Second to that, if you go on to read, the Lieutenant-Governor can decline any of the nominees provided by this nominating body, so they could ignore all the names put forward. Not only that, if the Lieutenant-Governor.... As the minister admitted in this House, if the name that's been put forward is someone that they don't like, they could ignore that. They could ask the nominating body to put forward another name, or al-

ternatively the government could appoint their own person. This is in relation to the representatives from the various regional districts. This is not the government appointments. So even on the regional district representation, there is substantive control from the government on this.

Not only that, if you go on to the following sections under section 2 — sections 6, 7 and 8 — which deal with appointment of directors, it reads:

"6 (1) Each of the nominating bodies is, at least 60 days before the expiry of the term of office of the director appointed from its nominees, to provide to the Lieutenant Governor in Council a list of" — at least one and not more than four — "nominees who are qualified individuals.

(2) A nominating body may nominate an existing director for successive terms of office.

(3) If a nominating body does not comply with subsection (1), the Lieutenant Governor in Council is to appoint a qualified individual to hold office as director after the expiry of the term of office of the director appointed from the nominees of that nominating body, and the director appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council under this subsection is deemed to be appointed from nominees provided by that nominating body under this section."

Then it goes on to talk about the removal of directors — that the Lieutenant-Governor-in Council may remove any director after receiving a written request to do so from the minister or the board of directors. I'm just going to pause here for one moment.

The minister could say, "I don't like so-and-so on the board, and I'm going to ask for that to be removed," and the minister could do that. That is complete control by the minister of the makeup of the board, because the makeup of the board is dependent on this minister's approval, and if the minister doesn't like it, he could have that individual removed. That is specifically provided for under section 7 of section 2, "Removal of directors."

How could the minister stand up in this House and say, "Don't worry. Trust me. Everything will be fine," when it's this minister who has absolute control of the makeup of the board in its appointment, removal and dismissal of board members?

The Chair: Member for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant.

[1715]

J. Kwan: Oh, the arrogance of this government. The minister thinks that he can just not answer questions. He can walk away from questions. He can ignore questions from the opposition when there's only one opposition member asking questions. Yet he says he's not abusing the power of government. "Don't worry, Columbia Basin Trust. You have full control. But I can appoint. I can dismiss. I can do whatever I want whenever I want. If I don't like it, too bad for you."

You know, it isn't just the opposition that has these concerns. These are valid concerns with respect to the makeup of the board. The minister was copied the let-

ter from the mayor of Revelstoke on Bill 79, particularly asking for consultation and delaying of passage of Bill 79. The minister, I'm sure, has received the letter that was sent to the Premier, because it is the practice of the Premier, I know, when he receives letters that fall under ministers' purviews to send those letters to the ministers for a response.

I would be very interested in whether or not the minister is going to be responding to the concerns that were raised by members of the community — the Creston museum and archive community, which has raised the issues; the city of Revelstoke, which has raised the issues; the cities of Nelson and Creston, which have raised the issues around the makeup of the board. Will the minister be responding to them?

Hon. R. Neufeld: Yes, I will be responding to the letters I received to correct the misinformation that's put forward and that's being brought forward in this House right now.

J. Kwan: There's no misinformation being brought forward from me. If there's any misinformation at all, it would be from the minister, because the minister will have you believe that in changing the makeup of the board, it does not impact who controls the board when, in fact, the minister has the power under this new act to appoint, dismiss and remove members of the board.

Previously, if you look at the Columbia Basin Trust Act, when you look at the issue around removal of directors.... Let me just put that on the record to compare it to what is now under section 7, removal of directors, which reads: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may remove any director after receiving a written request to do so from (a) the minister, or (b) the board of directors."

Formerly, under the Columbia Basin Trust Act, here's what the removal of directors section reads:

"(1) The board of a regional district may replace a director appointed by that board by providing to the minister (a) a statement revoking the director's appointment, signed by the officer of that board assigned responsibility under section 198 of the Local Government Act, and (b) the records required under section 6 (1) for the appointment of the replacement director by that board.

"(2) The tribal council may replace a director appointed by the tribal council by providing to the minister (a) a statement revoking the director's appointment, signed by at least 3 of the chiefs of the member bands of the tribal council, and (b) the records required under section 6 (2) for the appointment of the replacement director by the tribal council.

"(3) The term of office of a replacement director appointed under this section is the unexpired portion of the term of office of the director being replaced."

So when you compare these two sections, Bill 79 gives new authority to remove someone to this government, to this minister. The authority requested by regional districts and tribal councils was already there, and if the regional councils and the tribal council feel that it is appropriate to do so, they can exercise that right. I don't question that right, because the regional

council and the tribal councils should have their local authority to decide who they want on the board or who to remove. It's not for the minister to decide, but this is a new authority given to this government by this minister. Why?

Hon. R. Neufeld: As I said earlier, we've had a lot of consultation over the last two years with the Columbia Basin Trust board in regard to a lot of these issues. One of their recommendations.... Again, I know the member doesn't like taking the recommendations from the Columbia Basin Trust — doesn't trust the Columbia Basin Trust, I guess — but we finally did pass an amendment that came forward from the Columbia Basin Trust board.

[1720]

Also, the Columbia Basin Trust board has actually asked for what is in this new bill. I'm going to read it. "Removal of directors" — now, this comes from the Columbia Basin Trust board to all the regional districts and the tribal council — "allows either the minister or trust board to request removal of directors. It was felt a mechanism needed to be put in place which would ensure the ability to remove unproductive directors or those who were in conflict of interest or breach of confidentiality guidelines."

That comes not from me. It doesn't come from the Premier. It doesn't come from any one of these members. It actually comes from the Columbia Basin Trust board. Let's trust the Columbia Basin Trust board. Why don't we try that? You know, you're arguing for them. Trust them a little bit.

J. Kwan: What the minister just said is complete nonsense. The authority to remove a board member already exists under section 7 — the removal of directors at the request of the regional district or at the request of the tribal council. It's not at the request, under the new authority given to this minister under Bill 79, of the government or the minister to remove a board member. What the minister says the trust wants is already achieved under the existing act. The only difference is this, which the minister consistently fails to understand: the issue of control and power.

When I talk about control and power, I am saying that if this minister and this government really trust the people in the community, then he would relinquish the control and power to the community as is the case right now under the Columbia Basin Trust Act. He is taking away that power and control under this new act, where the power and control rests with the minister. The appointments will be made by the minister through the Lieutenant-Governor. The dismissal or removal of directors could be done by this minister as well — at the minister's whim, Mr. Chair, not at the request of the regional district or the tribal council. That is the power structure that this minister fails to recognize. If he says he trusts the people, then why doesn't he leave the makeup of the board and the removal of the board under the act as is?

You know, the minister refuses to answer the questions, and the members from the region fail to ask the

questions. If the members from the region were actually acting on behalf of their constituents, they would be standing on their feet asking the minister the same questions that I have put to the minister. They would be asking the questions and for the government to delay passage of Bill 79 if they were acting in accordance with the wishes of their community.

The fact that they are not tells you something, doesn't it? The entire government bench is controlled by the government. This minister is exerting his power over the Columbia Basin Trust, a community-based, community-dominated trust that will act in the best interests of their community. The government is taking away that power. The government is taking away the control from the community by the changes brought under section 6(2) in this bill and section 7 and section 8. It is absolutely dismaying.

[1725]

The minister says he's consulted. He said he has consulted members of the board of the Columbia Basin Trust on this legislation for two years. I'd like to actually ask the minister, just so that we are clear who exactly he consulted with, to name names of the people that he consulted with — and the consultation. Were they limited just to members of the board on the trust, or were the community members in the region consulted?

The Chair: The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: Such arrogance displayed by the minister. He refuses to answer questions. He sits in his chair with a look of disdain for questions from the opposition. There is one member in the opposition here asking questions.

Interjections.

J. Kwan: I don't think it's too much to ask. The members behind me are saying: "Well, it's the same question asked over and over again." I'm sorry to say that there's been no answer forthcoming from the minister. All the minister can say is: "Trust me; don't worry."

Interjection.

J. Kwan: And the member for North Vancouver–Seymour is sitting there saying: "Don't worry. Don't ask questions. These are repetitive questions." Well, then, where's the answer? Where's the answer?

Why doesn't the minister give the control to the people, when he says he trusts the people, by leaving the makeup of the board as it is so the majority of the board is made up of community representatives?

Hon. R. Neufeld: The board is made up of community members, all from the Columbia Basin Trust area — all 12 of them. They're all very good people who will represent the Columbia Basin Trust very well — every one of them. You count 'em right to 12. They'll all be from the Columbia basin.

J. Kwan: Why doesn't the minister let the community decide who should sit on that board, as opposed to him making that decision? Why doesn't the minister take away the provision that he could actually dismiss or remove a director from the board?

Hon. R. Neufeld: We actually give that authority to the tribal council and to the five regional districts. They come forward with names. For the other six names that government appoints, we actually ask the people of the Columbia basin. It's a refreshing way of doing business, and that's the way we do it. We actually get their names, and all 12 will come from the Columbia basin area.

J. Kwan: Isn't it the case that the minister can reject those names? And isn't it the case that there are six appointed members of this board that did not come from the regional districts? Isn't it the case that the makeup of the board has been reduced by six people from the regional districts, where formerly those appointments were solely from the regional districts and the tribal council and not by government? Isn't that the case?

D. Jarvis: The minister has been under a barrage of questions on one subject for over two hours now, and I think we're at the point where it's becoming repetitive beyond the point. For myself, I'm rather interested in getting on further with this bill.

Hon. S. Hagen: Tediously repetitious. Tedious.

J. Kwan: The Minister of Sustainable Resources Management is saying that the questions are tedious. Well, I am sorry to the members of this government who think that the makeup of the board for the Columbia Basin Trust — and its power, authority and control and its balance and how it is done — is tedious to this government. It is not tedious to the community who have concerns.

It is not tedious to the city of Revelstoke, which has asked for this bill to be delayed. It is not tedious to the Nelson-Creston community, which just had a town hall meeting. Over 125 people attended the town hall meeting and passed the resolution asking the government to not pass this bill. I'm sorry. It is not tedious for the community, and it is not tedious for the opposition. When the minister sits in his chair and he rises and says, "Don't worry; everything will be fine," it's simply not true. The makeup of the board is fundamentally different. The control of the board has been shifted. The government now has a new power, the power for the minister to remove a director. Why did the government put this provision in?

[1730]

Hon. R. Neufeld: Member, it was actually by suggestion from the Columbia Basin Trust board. That's why we did it. We were listening; we consulted.

The Chair: Hon. member, I think we have canvassed this section very, very well. I would suggest that we move on to another section.

J. Kwan: Let me ask the minister this question. Will he table the letter from the trust asking him to do that? He says the trust asked him to give him the authority and the power to remove a director from the board — for the minister to remove the director from the board, to be clear, not at the request of a regional district or tribal council but for the minister to unilaterally, under his own powers and decision, remove a board member. I would like for the minister, when we rise from committee, to table that letter. Will he commit to do that?

The Chair: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: I don't think it's too much to ask. The minister claims the trust asked him to unilaterally put in the authority for the minister to remove a director from the board. If in fact that's what the trust asked him to do, table that information when the committee rises so all members of the House can look at that information. Why wouldn't the minister commit to tabling that document?

Hon. R. Neufeld: The section she's referring to says that the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council may remove any director after receiving a written request to do so from the minister or the board of directors. That just doesn't give me the *carte blanche* right to remove someone. I still would have to put that through cabinet, to actually get approval from cabinet to do those kinds of things.

J. Kwan: Well, it is this government that makes that decision to remove the board. It is the minister who could put that request in to the Lieutenant-Governor. That is a new authority under this bill. Did the trust ask the government, this minister, to give this new authority under this bill?

The Chair: I would just encourage the member, once again, to.... I think this section has been well canvassed, and I think we should now move along to the next section.

J. Kwan: Mr. Chair, I'll tell you why I'm going after the minister on this. I doubt very much that that is in fact what the trust asked for. The portion the minister read out earlier does not say that. It does not say that. All the minister said, in reading out that document, was that the trust members were concerned that there be a mechanism to remove members who might be in conflict or other reasons.

You know what? Pertaining to removing members who might be in conflict or other valid reasons, that authority already exists. That authority exists in the hands and the power and the control of the community — the regional districts and the tribal councils. They

could make that request for a person to be removed from the board.

[1735]

This new power under Bill 79 for the minister to make the request to the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council is a new authority in which this government and cabinet will make the decisions in removing board members. It's a fundamental change in the shift of power.

For the minister to refuse to provide the documentation that he says he's got from the trust requesting that he have the unilateral power to remove a board member through the Lieutenant-Governor.... I don't believe it's true. I don't think the trust asked for that to be in place. I would ask the minister once again, if he's got nothing to hide, to put that information on the record. Table that information to the House when the committee rises.

Hon. R. Neufeld: I already read into the record the one paragraph.

The Chair: Shall section 2 as amended pass?

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Chair: So ordered.

J. Kwan: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Member, section 2 as amended has passed. We're now dealing....

J. Kwan: Mr. Chair, I stood up when you called the vote.

The Chair: Member, proceed.

J. Kwan: Unbelievable. Actually, it is absolutely shocking. It is absolutely shocking.

Interjection.

J. Kwan: The Minister for Deregulation says: "Stop whining." He goes: "Yes, I did."

Unbelievable. The last I checked, I have not become invisible. I know I'm only one voice, but it is still a voice, and I'm still entitled to ask questions in this House as the only opposition member doing that right now.

The Chair: Member, I think I have commented to you that your questioning has become tedious and repetitious. I think it is time to close the debate on this particular section and move along. I suggest it would be a good idea to move on to the next section.

J. Kwan: Well, you know, Mr. Chair, it is very unfortunate that everyone in this House thinks opposition questions are tedious and repetitious. I am really sorry. I asked the minister — several times, it's true — to table

the document in which he says the trust had asked him to give himself and this government the unilateral power to remove a director from a board. I don't believe it exists. I think the minister is misrepresenting the trust's request. I think the minister is fabricating that request. If the minister has nothing to hide, he will then table that documentation.

The Chair: Member, you used the term "fabricating." I believe that's unparliamentary language. I'd ask you to withdraw that, please.

J. Kwan: Well, then, not fabricate — make up that request in his own imagination.

The Chair: That's sort of marginal, as well, to the member, I think. If you'd retract that, please.

J. Kwan: Mr. Chair, I'm at a loss. I'm at a loss, because I'm seeking verification from the minister on that request, and he will not provide that information. I'm at a loss as to how to proceed here. I'm at a loss as to why the minister would not provide that information. I can only surmise that the request doesn't exist, that it's a figment of somebody's imagination, that it is just made up.

If I'm wrong on that, well, then say that I'm wrong and prove me wrong. Put the documentation on record. Submit it for all members of the House and the public to see so that we know what is the truth and what is not the truth. I challenge that, through you, Mr. Chair, to the minister.

Hon. R. Neufeld: Unlike the last administration, I'm not here fabricating anything. I read into the record something that had been discussed, as I understand from the officials, at length with the Columbia Basin Trust — with Mr. Smienk and group. I'm sure they took it back to the board and discussed it. These were things they wished to see. They actually helped us draft this bill so it represented what the people in the Kootenays wanted.

[1740]

Unfortunately, the member is the one that's trying to say that the Kootenays shouldn't have what they actually should have. That's unfortunate — to stand in this House and have the member of the opposition try to say that the Kootenays, the Columbia Basin Trust, shouldn't have what they deserve to have.

We have had lots of consultation — as I said, about two years — and this section was there. It didn't raise the ire that the member tries to bring forward in this House and in fact was discussed at length. That's why, in notes written to the staff, they thought this would be a good idea.

Now, you may not think it's a good idea, and that's fine for you to think that. That's absolutely your total right in this House — to not think that's a good idea. I understand that; I accept that. I'll move on, but I will also accept, as I did the amendment from the Columbia Basin Trust, that we want to actually work with the

trust as best we possibly can, remembering that they will make the decisions in the best interests of the people from the Columbia basin.

J. Kwan: Let me ask the minister a very specific question: did the trust ask the minister to put this provision in the bill, which reads: "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may remove any director after receiving a written request to do so from (a) the minister..."? Did the minister receive that specific request from the trust? Yes or no?

The Chair: Member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant.

J. Kwan: Well, why won't the minister answer that question, Mr. Chair? There's nothing mysterious about that. He claims that the trust asked him to do that. I'm seeking verification for that, and he refuses to provide it. He says: "Hey, trust me." You know what? I'm sorry to say that the record of this minister and this government does not earn and has not earned the trust of many British Columbians, including the opposition. They have broken promises. They have betrayed many British Columbians with their broken promises, and I don't trust this minister when he says that the Columbia Basin Trust had asked this minister to put in a provision that says the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council may remove any director after receiving a written request to do so from the minister. I don't think that exists.

Let me just say this. The minister claims that he's consulted with people. I asked the minister who he's consulted with. He refused to provide that information. I asked him for the names of the people he consulted with, and he refuses to provide that information. The city of Revelstoke, the mayor of Revelstoke, has written to the member for Columbia River–Revelstoke saying: "Get the passage of the bill delayed and make sure that people are consulted." That is not being done. Not only is the government ignoring the city of Revelstoke, but the member from that community is ignoring the request from her own city.

The Nelson-Creston council has also sent in a resolution asking for this bill not to be passed. The government and the MLAs from that community, Nelson-Creston, are ignoring that request. A town hall meeting was held — 125 people from the community showed up — and the government is ignoring that request.

A community group called the Creston and District Museum and Archives passed a resolution asking for this bill to be delayed in its passage and particularly for the government to revoke section 2 in terms of the makeup of the board. The government is ignoring that.

The litany of concerns continue, and the government is ignoring all of that. The opposition will not support this government's arrogant approach in dismantling the Columbia Basin Trust and the authority and the control that rightly should continue to rest with the people, with the majority of its control being in the community, by regional district members and

tribal councils and appointments to be made at their own decision. Removal of board members should not be done by the request of a minister to the Lieutenant-Governor. Removal of directors should only be done at the request of the regional district or the tribal council. It should not be at the unilateral decision of this minister, through the Lieutenant-Governor.

This government is taking away the fundamental basics of community power, community control and trust in the community by passing this section of the bill.

Section 2 as amended approved on the following division:

[1745-1750]

YEAS — 38

Falcon	Halsey-Brandt	Whittred
Hansen	J. Reid	Bruce
Santori	Barisoff	Roddick
Masi	Thorpe	Hagen
Bond	Neufeld	Coleman
Jarvis	Anderson	Harris
Brenzinger	Bell	Chutter
Mayencourt	Bennett	Hayer
Christensen	Krueger	McMahon
Bray	Les	Bhullar
Wong	Bloy	Suffredine
K. Stewart	Lekstrom	Sultan
Manhas		Hunter

NAYS — 2

Nettleton Kwan

On section 3.

J. Kwan: Section 3 deals with the directors' remuneration. The section sets the remuneration in accordance with Treasury Board guidelines. The question is: could the minister tell us what the minister is trying to fix here with this new section?

Hon. R. Neufeld: There are guidelines that are set out by Treasury Board as to the remuneration that's paid to people that sit on boards and commissions. All that's saying is that the Treasury Board directives will be met.

J. Kwan: What are the guidelines?

Hon. R. Neufeld: They're on the comptroller general's website.

J. Kwan: Will this affect the ability of the board members to travel to board meetings?

Hon. R. Neufeld: No.

J. Kwan: I actually don't have the website in front of me. Maybe the member for Nelson-Creston thinks it's funny when I say I don't actually have the website in front of me. He just burst into laughter.

There is one member in opposition here trying to ask legitimate questions. If the members of this House think they're tedious.... I know they have said they think they are.

Interjections.

J. Kwan: You know, I'll bet you the member for Nelson-Creston doesn't know what the guidelines are. I'll bet you he doesn't know, but he doesn't care to ask that question.

What provisions might be restrictive under these guidelines that might differ from what was allowed for these board members? Perhaps the minister can advise the House of that.

[1755]

Hon. R. Neufeld: The folks that are actually on the Columbia Basin Trust now will not have any remuneration changed, either more or less. They'll be grandfathered. What will happen is that the Crown agencies secretariat will work towards selecting any number of eight different categories of pay for people that sit on agencies, boards and commissions. That hasn't been done yet because we're still working through this process. For anyone that's there now, it doesn't change.

J. Kwan: Does the remuneration differ for the chair or for directors — members of the board and not the chair of the board?

Hon. R. Neufeld: In general, yes.

J. Kwan: It is obvious that the answers are not really forthcoming from the minister, and I would have to look it up on the website to get the full details of that information. I will do that.

Noting the time, I move the committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 5:56 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Committee of the Whole (Section B), having reported progress, was granted leave to sit again.

Hon. S. Hagen moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: The House is adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 5:57 p.m.