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6TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2005

The House met at 10:04 a.m.

Prayers.

Private Members' Statements

LOCAL HEALTH CARE INITIATIVE

K. Stewart: It's my privilege today to take my time to talk about health care. As many of you know, the delivery of health care is one of the challenges that's facing all global communities, and there are not too many jurisdictions in the world that would say that they have this under control.

[1005]

If we use the measurements of life span and life-style, in British Columbia and Canada we're doing pretty good. Canada has one of the longest average life expectancies in the world, and British Columbia has one of the longest in Canada — close to 80 years old for women, and men are quickly closing the gap with less than a year behind.

In British Columbia we've increased the health care budget over \$2 billion, up 23 percent since 2001. How has this impacted my community? Well, let me just give a quick profile of my community. In Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, the two communities, the population is over 80,000. About 75 percent of these people are in my riding. British Columbia has an average of 13 percent of the community made up of seniors. In my community it's approximately 11 percent. With regard to children, we have a higher percentage of younger children in our community than the rest of British Columbia. Ours is about 10 percent higher.

When we talked about health care delivery in all of British Columbia, we talked about the improvement in emergency care. I'd like to take a few minutes to talk about some of the emergency care improvements that have happened in my area. At our Maple Ridge hospital, the Ridge Meadows Hospital, we are undertaking an emergency ambulatory care redevelopment project. This project originally started out with a \$6 million contribution from the provincial government, which has been upped now to \$8 million, and the community, which has been very supportive of health care delivery in our community, has upped their contribution from \$2 million to \$3 million. So we've gone from a project that was scheduled to be at \$8 million; it's now up to \$11 million.

The emergency access program for our emergency.... This a regionwide initiative that has been extremely successful at our Ridge Meadows Hospital. The average waiting time for emergency patients seeking admission into the hospital — those who come into emergency and are waiting to get into hospital beds — has declined from 23 to 8 hours. This is a significant improvement in that area. Contributing factors include the 24-hour home support service, which allows people to be moved through the system a little better, and a team focus for discharging patients. The holdup was

getting the beds available at the front end. Needing to get beds freed up at the front end, one would have to, of course, have people discharged at the other end.

There was also the addition of a full-time psychiatric nursing position. This also helped to move people through the ER and to assist patients who have addictions and those who have mental health issues.

The surgical services have also seen a great expansion in our hospital. We have expanded the capacity in our surgical wards by completing the opening of a fourth surgery facility, an operating room. That was in September. We've also had surgical funding that has allowed this to be opened on Saturdays. This has added another ability for the hospital to do 55 joint cases. I assume that's joints in the body and not from issues with drugs out in east Maple Ridge. This has added those facilities to our community hospital, so people with hip and knee replacements will have a little quicker service. We've also added a new general surgeon position in the surgery department.

When we look at the operation of our hospital, many of the doctors have commented to me on how more efficiently run the operations are in the hospital, plus the addition of new equipment makes it much easier for them to diagnose and much quicker for them to get the information they need to deal with the patients at hand.

A couple of the new pieces of equipment that have been added to our hospital include the CT scanner. The Ridge Meadows Hospital has reduced patient lists for this procedure by 50 percent. Before, they had to go to another hospital. The community came on board in a very big way and helped support the purchase of this equipment. Also, in doing so, they were able to add a digital storage unit, which means that all the information can be kept digitally, and it can be transferred very easily to the doctors and to other specialists who are dealing with the patient. At a touch of a keystroke on a computer, they have that information in front of them.

Another thing that has come out of this technology was the startup of PACS. This is North America's largest on-line system for sending these diagnostic images. This happened initially at Ridge Meadows Hospital. I was at a technology meeting where I met some people from Bill Gates's organization. This project at the Ridge Meadows Hospital was one that he actually talked about in one of his international speeches. Obviously, this is the latest state-of-the-art technology in image diagnosis.

[1010]

The other thing we received for equipment was a new echo machine. This came to Ridge Meadows Hospital in 2004. This, again, made it available for the doctors in our hospital so they didn't have to send people to Eagle Ridge for this one test.

There is also a mini c-arm at Ridge Meadows Hospital, which has been wanted for some time by the orthopedic surgeons. This will allow for easier imaging, and it's also on a portable machine so it can be moved around the hospital.

One of the areas that I am personally very pleased with is the designation of our community as an area of

need. We were very short in the number of doctors per capita in the region of Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows. As a result of this designation, we've been able to recruit 15 family doctors and seven specialists to our community. This is a big factor in our community, as now — and I don't want to say this too loudly, because I know there are many communities that are constantly looking for doctors for their patients — we have doctors that are actually advertising for patients in the local newspaper, which is certainly quite different than it was just a few short years ago.

Another initiative that's impacted the doctors in our area is the addition of a hospitalist program for orphaned patients in our hospital. By "orphaned patients" I mean those that don't have a regular doctor or whose doctor isn't available at the time they're in the hospital. This ensures that these so-called orphaned patients will receive daily attention by a hospitalist who is dedicated to them individually while they're staying at the hospital, to ensure that they're moving through the tests that they need and to ensure that their discharge plans are in place and that there's support from the family for them when they are discharged.

There was another innovation that was put forward in the winter at our hospital. It was winter-surge funding. This provided for seven additional beds open from December to March, when obviously the flu season is in full force. The geriatric teams there were able to assist with these additional beds for the complex needs of many seniors.

Now, I have many more things to say about our health care system in our area, but at this point I'd just like to ask the Minister of Health to make a few comments, because I know of the great work that's been done provincially. We're certainly seeing that in our local community.

Hon. S. Bond: It is an absolute delight this morning to be in the House and to be hearing some of the great-news stories around health care in British Columbia. Certainly, this is a government that has taken the provision of resources for health care very seriously, and as the member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows points out, we've added in excess of \$2.4 billion to ensure that the kinds of things that the member has brought to our attention this morning are happening not simply in his riding but in ridings all across the province.

I am so pleased to have seen the work of the member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows. He is absolutely passionate about health care services and ensuring that those are closer to home. He is very concerned about the issues related to our youngest British Columbians. In fact, the member was instrumental in pursuing paediatric services in his local hospital and also made sure, as the member pointed out, that this particular area was listed as an area of priority recruitment for GPs and also specialists. And the results are clear. The member made them very obvious to us this morning. In fact, new family doctors and seven specialists are practising as a result of the hard work that was done,

much of it under the leadership of the member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows.

One of the other facilities that's incredible and is related to this particular riding is the Asante fetal alcohol centre. That particular centre is an absolutely amazing place. That particular centre receives referrals from all over the province, and this member has certainly pursued significantly the goal and funding and resources for the centre.

But innovation in health care is not simply reserved for this particular member's riding. In fact, we see all across the province that health authorities are working to deal with the challenges they face in incredibly innovative and very resourceful ways. We know that British Columbians are receiving health care closer to home, and I want to give you just a couple of examples of local innovation in health care. It's certainly something that we embrace and celebrate as a government.

[1015]

I want to highlight very quickly three achievements in three of our health authorities that were recognized — nationally, in fact — for what they are doing closer to home to deliver patient-centred care. Awarded annually, the 3M Health Care Quality Team Award is handed out by the Canadian College of Health Service Executives. This prominent health care industry accolade acknowledges successful, sustainable quality-improvement projects that demonstrate high levels of innovation and outstanding teamwork. There are a number of categories, and British Columbia has won two of them — one in non-acute and one in acute care.

Vancouver Island health authority won the prestigious national 3M Health Care Quality Team Award in the non-acute care category. The Vancouver Island health authority's chronic disease care program involves 32 doctors on southern Vancouver Island and 4,000 patients and helps improve the identification and management of diabetes, congestive heart failure and depression. By applying evidence-based quality-improvement models and effective chronic disease management techniques, the project promotes practical and supportive interactions between empowered patients and a proactive interdisciplinary health provider team.

So far the great news is that 90 percent of the participating physicians believe that they are better equipped to improve the process of care for their patients with chronic disease. Better patient care is exactly what innovation is all about.

Another example. Providence Health Care's Vancouver coastal foot and ankle clinic received the 3M Health Care Quality Team Award for Canada in the acute care category. Their project was entitled A Multidisciplinary Pathway for Surgical Patients from First Hospital Visit to Discharge. It outlines the new way that patients receive care.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say that the good news in health care is often lost in some of the noise we hear from, in particular, the members opposite. But today we've heard examples of how we are making a difference in British Columbia. When you look at a government that has committed funding to

the level that we have and that will look to increase that over the next number of years.... We know that patients deserve quality health care, and they deserve it much closer to home.

I was really delighted to hear about some of the improvements in ER care taking place at Ridge Meadows Hospital. We know that at particular times of the year there certainly are challenges in ER care, and to look at the innovation in a program like a winter-surge program says exactly the kinds of things we need to be looking at. So thank you to the member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows for a great news story in health care.

K. Stewart: In closing, I'd like to thank the minister for her hard work and dedication. I know that under her watch the health care system is going to continue to improve in our province.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to thank the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development for her work in assisting me with the Asante Centre. We know that an ounce of work in looking to help people early in the stages of trying to prevent health care problems is only going to help us a lot down the road, and this is one area that we're certainly supportive of.

I'd like to take just a last couple of minutes and quickly close with some discussion about our aging population and the impact on our health care system. This looming challenge has gone unaddressed for at least a decade, with the previous government not even having the foresight to have a planning department to look at this. Any demographer could have told you as early as the sixties that we have this huge challenge of aging. The demographics are there, and the bulge is starting to come upon us.

There was obviously some need for some facilities. I know there's been a lot of discussion about facilities, but one of the great things I've seen in my community is, first, an upgrade of the existing facilities. A lot of the facilities were very old. There was only the one level of care — intermediate care — and then the hospital.

What we've seen now is, at least in some areas, a great improvement in the supportive care. That allows people two things. It's the supportive care in the homes and also the assisted living facilities which allow people to make that transition.

One of the most startling things I noticed.... I went to an intermediate care facility and saw a woman who was in her seventies. She'd been in there for 15 years. At the age she was and the condition she was, she could have at least been in an assisted care facility if not in her own home if she had the supportive care. That's what we did with people 15 years ago. We just plunked them in the one institution.

In our community I am very pleased to say we've had the two older facilities at our hospital, the Creekside and Alouette manors, which have 130 patients in them.... We're building brand-new facilities for them. We're upgrading those facilities, and construction is underway as we speak.

We had the Royal Crescent assisted living facility just completed, and the previous minister was out and

saw it. He could not believe the quality of the facility. He was very taken aback, and we're very proud to have that facility.

[1020]

We also have the private sector coming in. We have the Willow Manor, which has opened in our community. This is a great facility for seniors. It gives them that option of private care there that's available to the community. It adds beds. There's also the opportunity for the ministry to purchase space there.

Another facility, the Golden Ears retirement home, is looking to triple their capacity under a new redevelopment plan. Many of these beds will be available for full government funding.

In closing, I'd just like to say again that we've got some catch-up to do with this with regard to senior care. I think that by first looking at the facilities we have and then looking to expanding, we're on the right track. I look forward to a future where all our seniors will be cared for in facilities that are appropriate for their needs.

SUCCESS BY 6

S. Orr: Today I rise on behalf of the member for Nelson-Creston to talk about the Success by 6 early childhood development partnership. The member unfortunately got hung up with travel plans.

I just have to say right here that I have such respect for all of these people that come in from across the province. I'm a very spoiled human being. I live here. I drive my car. I sleep in my bed. I must say that I just have to comment on that. I know that the member really wanted this speech delivered, and I am very happy to do it for him.

This is very important to him. He's talked to me about it before. Again, to all those members who have to come from such a long distance and who have to be away from their families, I thank you on behalf of just myself. As I say, I'm very fortunate and can live here.

Success by 6 is a program that is concerned with ensuring that all children from birth up until the age of six have access to programs that support healthy growth and development. Through an innovative partnership between credit unions, the United Way and the provincial government, Success by 6 is building communities from the bottom up.

This is a government concerned with the well-being of the entire province, in the present and long into the future. We want results, but ones that will develop into long-lasting, sustainable programs or institutions. We want to build for the future, and we have a plan to do so.

Prevention plays a significant role in our plans. All of the initiatives this government has instated have looked not only on the problems at hand but deeper, to the sources of these problems. Health care, education, job creation — all of these things don't just depend on the amount of money you put into them, for that would be endless. They require planning, decision-making and excellent leadership.

Throwing money at our problems is nothing more than a band-aid solution. We have learned from poor management in previous governments to go to the root of the problem. For many cases prevention is the unrivalled solution.

Success by 6 is an excellent example of a program that goes to the very root of our society: our children. It is designed to help those who are the most vulnerable, those who are unable to help themselves and those who have no choice of where they are born and under what circumstances. Success by 6 utilizes the notion of a community raising children rather than the parent alone. This is essential in preventing many of our societal shortcomings. We are building positive, contributing members of the community, and this will benefit everyone, not just one segment of our society. Prevention — through healthy lives, yes; by promoting education, yes; but first and foremost through giving our children the best.

Research has shown that the most critical years of human development are from birth until the age of six. These are the years when the brain is building and neural pathways are being formed — connections that will influence their entire lives. Approximately 90 percent of the brain's growth occurs by the age of five.

Without the right stimulation during certain periods of development, the full potential of that child is permanently lost. We cannot wait or pause while time quickly passes. Science is constantly reaffirming that brain development during pregnancy, as infants and as toddlers affects learning and behaviour as well as physical and mental health throughout life.

[1025]

Let's consider the child born this year, and that is my grandchild that was born last week. This little soul is what this applies to. If given proper nutrition, affection, nurturing, stimulation and an engaging, stimulating environment, they will develop brains with many neural connections. This child ends up healthier, socially engaged, responsible, successful at learning and better able to cope with stress. They are even said to have a better sense of self.

A similar child in an insecure, violent or chaotic environment will be more likely to have difficulty dealing with stress and will be generally less healthy, less able to fight disease and more prone to drug abuse and smoking, as well as negative habits, as they grow older. We can all see that the costs over the long run for the second child far outweigh those of the first child. Everyone who has had children understands the personal desire to wish the best for our children, and most parents, if able, use this desire to help their children reach their greatest potential.

As mentioned earlier, environment and parenting contribute immensely to early childhood development. Parental awareness is critical. Success by 6 addresses issues around parenting — the importance of educating the parent or guardian, expressing the significance of reading to your children, finding good day care, spending quality time together — and how all these contribute to your child's development.

We make the assumption that all parents should know how to raise their children. I never received a handbook. I have five children, and I'm still learning. Success by 6 allows us not to be perfect. There is no such thing as a perfect parent, but there is such a thing as a good parent, and that is often an educated parent.

There are over 250,000 children under the age of six in the province today — capable little minds struggling to achieve their potential. Unfortunately, approximately 25 percent of today's children age six are not ready to attend preschool. This is a number that should be much lower.

Fortunately, Success by 6, along with this government, recognizes the importance of these early developing years and the child's surroundings. This government provided a \$10 million grant as part of its commitment to this program. This established the early childhood partnership fund. With the partners' help, Success by 6 initiatives are developing all over the province. So far there are 18 to 19 initiatives being established throughout the province, with six of these initiatives in the interior.

Success by 6 is not a one-size-fits-all program. Once an initiative has been set up, a council of the partners — business, labour and government — builds a strategy plan for their community, developing priorities that are individually tailored to their situation. I know that my colleague in his riding of Nelson-Creston has been doing this. He's talked about it many times.

As we can see, our investment is paying off. Money and time devoted to Success by 6 are going to find a better B.C., and with the continued effort of the Success by 6 partnership, we are sure to make improvements.

On that note, I invite my colleague the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development to offer her thoughts on this important issue. I look forward to her comments, as they come with a wealth of experience and a great depth of knowledge.

Hon. L. Reid: It's Valentine's Day. What a grand gift to be able to speak about the children of this province. I thank my hon. colleagues the members for Victoria-Hillside and particularly Nelson-Creston, because both individuals have been fierce advocates for the work of this government in this area. I thank them both most sincerely.

If any of you have been to my office — and many of you have — there's a memorandum of understanding hanging on the wall. It was signed in 2003. It carries the Premier's signature, my signature and the signature of the head of the Central Credit Union movement, Mr. Dave Mowat. What it signifies is a partnership that's all about Success by 6.

The United Way signature that's attached to that brings those four partners together, if you will, and says how important it is that each of us advance the notion of prevention in health care and prevention in child care and that we marry those pieces together, wrap it all around a really solid base of early childhood development.

[1030]

The notion of preventing any calamity in a child's life is a wondrous opportunity for governments. The opportunity to put forward a glorious childhood before the babies of this province is a wondrous opportunity. There's no question about that. So how we proceed, how we collectively align our resources to ensure that every single baby born in this province.... There are approximately 42,000 born annually in British Columbia — 42,000 opportunities that we would wish to see blessed by the resources, by the economic fabric of this province.

The Premier has been passionate that if, indeed, we want a stronger economy in British Columbia, it will be because we have stronger families. The Success by 6 partnership is exactly one of those partnerships. I mentioned the Central Credit Union movement. George Scott, with VanCity, was integral to this debate and this partnership coming to the fore. He said: "You know, communities in British Columbia can, indeed, be more actively involved and can cite for themselves the notion that babies are their future citizens." In this instance, they are future credit union members, our future students — frankly, future parliamentarians — future business owners, future employees. We need to look at brand-new offspring in this province as the fabric that will strengthen the province as we go forward.

It has been a glorious partnership. As the member for Victoria-Hillside has mentioned, it is about community mobilization. It's how you get members of the community excited and exhilarated by the notion of caring for children. It's vitally important.

The Premier has been passionate that we only go forward from the base of the best possible science. We have engaged Dr. Clyde Hertzman, the University of British Columbia and the human early learning partnership, because it involves every single major university in British Columbia — well over 200 university academics today, university researchers engaging in discovering and resolving issues that will impact on how we deliver care to babies and children in the province.

I'll give you a glorious example: Dr. Brian Christie at the University of British Columbia and his research in terms of the best learning environments for brand-new babes affected by fetal alcohol or by drug addiction. What kind of environments will they prosper in? In fact, this province, as many jurisdictions in Canada, used to treat those populations in exactly the same way — low lighting, low-stimulus environment, tamped down.

What he has found — and his research is abundantly clear on this question — is that it's a different response required if you're affected by alcohol. It should be a high-energy, high-stimulus, high-exercise environment if you're a baby affected by alcohol. The other approach — tamped down, low-stimulus environment — is absolutely the correct approach for a drug-addicted babe. Understanding the nuances, the differences, in those populations will, in fact, change the outcome for those babies, and that practice will

come to bear in British Columbia as a result of this partnership.

Academics coming closer to guiding, directing and strategizing with government on the best approaches — it's absolutely the right way to proceed. We want very much to make better strategic decisions in government around the babies of this province. Dr. Hertzman's work has pointed out, in terms of his community mapping, where we should site new libraries, new literacy programs and new support programs for families. At the end of the day, we want babies to be better cared for by their families, so the work we can do around durable parenting is vitally important.

We want very much to ensure that we make good strides as we go forward. With the assistance of my colleagues at the cabinet table and my colleagues the MLAs in this chamber I can tell you that this government is on record as leading the country in terms of strong early childhood development. To each and every one of you who wake up every day concerned about the babies of this province, I thank you most sincerely.

S. Orr: Many thanks to the minister for her knowledge and leadership in all areas of early childhood development. This minister is exceedingly passionate about this. We've had endless conversations. You go to her office, and you can tell that this is her passion.

It is with this government's initiative that we will strive to make B.C. achieve its potential. Nothing should stop us from giving our kids the best and the brightest opportunity to succeed. This is an essential step in improving literacy as well as taking some weight off our health care system and finding jobs for all British Columbians.

By giving our children the opportunity to participate in quality programs during their early years, we are giving them great gifts: better interaction with peers, easier transition into schools, better classroom skills, larger vocabulary, better language skills, better health — and the list goes on. Our children will eventually inherit this province and all that the government has done with it. Do we want this to be a positive or a negative statement? I am not sure the inheritance would have been positive four years ago: debt, unbalanced budget, health care crisis, etc. With the changes this government has made and the plan we have for this province, we will have something good to pass to our children.

[1035]

It is rewarding to hear firsthand what plans have been laid for our children's future. I can truly say I'm excited for what my children will have in store for them. I like to imagine B.C. as a province reborn.

For almost four years we have been nurturing this province, helping it develop like a new child. We will achieve our Success by 6. Can you imagine where we would be in two more years? We are cultivating a province with the potential to be phenomenal in its maturity. Our plan is in motion.

On that note, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for giving me the opportunity to deliver the speech on his behalf.

SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN

V. Anderson: Today I would like to highlight our collective opportunity and responsibility to give priority to our children, as we have been discussing this morning.

By their very nature, children at birth and even prior to birth are dependent for their well-being on the adults who care for them. They are dependent on others for their physical, social, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development and are dependent until they become adults in their own right. Sometimes even then they will need continual help, as all of us do in our interdependent world.

Thus, it means that we need to consider carefully how we are supportive individually and collectively to the children of our communities and their families. We need to reflect on a regular basis what our opportunity and responsibility to our children is. Perhaps we begin with the well-worn phrase that actions speak louder than words. It is a reminder that every single action in which we engage has an effect upon our children — using "our" to refer to the children of our communities locally, nationally and internationally.

The cumulative effect of the actions of our lifestyles, in total, reflects our responsibility or lack of it to the younger members and their generation. Every action or inaction of this Legislature has a bearing on the well-being of the world's children. We know well the phrase "the global village" but often fail to reflect it in our daily lives. I highlight these overall responsibilities that we bear because we cannot discuss the rights of our children without accepting that children depend on responsible adults for their very being and for their lifetime development.

The Society for Children and Youth of British Columbia has long advocated for the well-being of our children. They have challenged the Legislature on numerous occasions to take seriously our responsibility for the United Nations convention on the rights of the child. They ask: does domestic legislation measure up to the statements of the United Nations covenant that Canada, on our behalf, has signed with 187 different countries around the world? They have developed a model to be used to assess the compliance of policy and practice with the convention.

In May 2004 a forum was held in this regard at the Justice Institute of B.C. in cooperation with the International Institute for Child Rights and Development at the University of Victoria, the Canadian Coalition for the Rights of Children from Ottawa and the National Children's Alliance. Currently they are following up on this process and urging the government of B.C. to be an active participant.

Of course, the final requirement for us, as legislators, is to be aware of and to understand and appreciate the convention itself. As a reminder of this, this

coming week I will deliver to each member of the Legislature a copy of the convention.

[1040]

The second requirement is that we study this convention and seek out its implications for our actions in the Legislature. We can do this by asking a question: how does our commitment as a province to this convention impact our actions within the Legislature? Is our legislation consistent with our commitment?

Theoretically, I believe we have all agreed that the well-being of children is a priority in our families and our communities. However, it is then up to us to discover how 20 percent of the children in Canada continue to live in poverty, with inadequate housing, inadequate food, inadequate health care — and so similarly here in British Columbia.

Fortunately, the children's agenda in B.C. has been newly invigorated with our focus on early childhood development, on healthy children, on renewal in education and on child care. Yet another agenda also needs to be studied: how does the legislation produce and work with non-profit community groups for a cooperative approach — as was mentioned this morning with Success by 6 — for the well-being of British Columbia? How does an interministerial committee work together between the ministries to have a common approach to the families and children of our province? Have we asked ourselves how the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms relate to the convention of the well-being of children and how these are reflected in our legislation?

As a democracy we are encouraging and seeking freedom for all peoples in their individual affiliations, no matter where they live. Does this fully include our concern for children — that they have the rights for recognition, for healthy food, for clothing, for education and, most of all, for love? What discussions have we undertaken on the well-being of our children? Is it in the headlines of our community newspapers? How does this relate to our commitment to the convention on the rights of the child? I believe it is urgent that we undertake this discussion, and I thank the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development, who has spearheaded this new understanding of our children and of their development within our province. I would ask her to share her thoughts with us.

Hon. L. Reid: It is indeed an honour for me to follow the member for Vancouver-Langara and his topic of supporting our children.

I certainly often quote a saying that says: "Children are the messengers we send to a time that we will never see." We as a Legislature, we as a collective, must decide what that message will be. All of you know my message on this question — that it is about safeguarding the wee souls. I was very touched recently to be at an event with the Minister of Labour, who also referred to the babies of this province as wee souls.

Indeed, when the Premier came to me and created the expectation that we create a cross-government inte-

grated strategy around early childhood development.... I am pleased to tell you that I believe we're well on the way. I believe we have created some wonderful opportunities.

The debate about the investment, the quality of the investment and the dividends it pays is long over. That research is well established, and I do believe it is our responsibility, certainly — as parents, as politicians, as policy-makers and, frankly, as concerned individuals — to build the kind of society we would wish to leave for those who will come after us. I believe that in British Columbia we are doing that.

The UN convention on the rights of the child spells out the basic rights of children, and the challenge for governments is to ensure that we look at the decisions we take and the legislation we pass through a child's lens. What does that particular process look like from the perspective of a child? What do they see from their vantage point of being three or four or five years old in British Columbia?

Certainly, the ratification since 1991 isn't that old. It's a 14-year ratification. Have we made sufficient progress over those 14 years? I think we have done remarkable things in British Columbia, some extraordinary things. I think we have much work to do in terms of the 42,000 babies born next year and each year following. I want us very much to continue the work around a cross-government integrated strategy.

[1045]

I want us to continue to put parents first. I want us to look at how we support parents in the province. All of us in this Legislature want children to be happy, to be healthy and to have opportunity. All of us wish that. What we would wish for our own children is, frankly, what we wish for the babies of this province. If we have that understanding, we need to respond to the families' needs. I'm absolutely delighted to tell you that the Premier shares that commitment — that he's vitally concerned with how we care for the youngsters of this province.

I can tell you I've had the absolute pleasure to have wondrous dealings with the infant development program in the province, led by Dr. Dana Brynelsen from the University of British Columbia. That is very much a program that supports people in their homes. When they have a vulnerable, at-risk infant, it is someone who comes to the door and shares the trials and tribulations, the energy, the opportunities and the gains that those little souls will make. No question about that.

My challenge has been to continue to integrate that process as we go forward. We've created a provincial aboriginal infant development adviser in British Columbia, because we want very much to strengthen that fabric. We've supported the refocus of child development in the province. Infant development programs in British Columbia are for babies from birth to three years of age. Supported child development is from three to six years of age. We want parents to experience a continuum — that they do not have to look for new services when their child turns three, that they are transitioned smoothly into the school system.

Provincial consultant for pediatric therapies. We had the pleasure of having a speech-language pathologist guide us in our first year. We will have an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist guide us in our second year and then in our third year. We want that level of expertise to come to government.

We've created some new funding opportunities for children with autism. All of those, I believe, fit beautifully under the United Nations Charter. I believe they fit because they honour parental choice, parental responsibility and, I believe, our obligation to ensure that parents have the skills they need to take those issues forward with some finesse.

I have a strong passion around aboriginal early childhood development. If we can create opportunities where aboriginal first nation families in British Columbia believe they are well supported.... We have 41 aboriginal early childhood development sites in British Columbia, and that number continues to grow on a regular basis. As the word moves forward, so do the programs that follow.

I think that is the hon. member for Vancouver-Langara's point — that, indeed, the action must follow the word. We, I think, have done some very, very good, respectful engagements with aboriginal communities in British Columbia, and that speaks to me. The work will only continue if people believe in the work. Any one of us can create change with sufficient resources. The challenge will be: does the change continue? Does the change endure once we are no longer in these seats? That is the expectation, certainly.

I might close by saying a few words to honour the lifelong work of the member for Vancouver-Langara on this very important question. He is a community capacity builder of the highest order. Of that there is no question. His resonance will stay with us long after he has exited this chamber.

It has been an honour to work with him, and we will certainly go forward. Thank you very much.

V. Anderson: I would thank the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development for her comments and, particularly, for her actions in this province, which have made a significant difference to thousands of children and their families.

She referred to the task given to her by the Premier, and I would like to read a letter today into the record, written by Gordon Campbell when he was mayor of Vancouver in 1992:

"The city of Vancouver believes that children are our most important resource and represent our hope for the future. We are committed to being a city that provides healthy, safe and supportive environments in which our children can grow. We recognize that if we can be a city that works for children, then we'll be a city that works for everyone.

"In order to promote the well-being of children, the city has undertaken a number of activities. We have established the unique position of children's advocate — a person at city hall with the job of advising city council how we can best meet the needs of children. We have adopted a comprehensive civic child care policy with

policies and resources to help develop a continuous quality of child care choices in each neighbourhood. We have supported the school-based hot lunch program in our inner-city schools and have worked hard to see that other levels of government also accept their responsibility for children.

[1050]

"Recently city council unanimously adopted a children's policy and children's agenda to guide the city's actions on children's issues in the future. We are proud of these initiatives but know that much more remains to be done. We hope that the community at large will join in this important work.

"Yours truly,
Gordon Campbell
Mayor"

I want to say that he has taken his words sincerely. He has moved ahead into another level of government. He has given it a priority. We have joined with him in a priority for our children in British Columbia, and I want to say thank you for his vision, his insight and his persistence.

DREAM HOME CHINA

G. Trumper: I rise today to talk about the China Dream Home project. With all that we hear about the Canadian softwood lumber dispute with the United States, how long it continues and the negative impacts on British Columbia families, communities and British Columbia as a province, it's my pleasure to talk about a new project that will increase demand for British Columbia lumber.

Last month I joined the Minister of Forests, the Minister of State for Immigration and Multiculturalism Services and the member for Burnaby North for a trade mission to China. We travelled to Shanghai, where the China Dream Home project was constructed to demonstrate what B.C. lumber and wood products can do for Chinese housing.

We also participated in the opening of the China Dream Home project. What was most noticeable was that as we walked into the building, we could smell the wood. We could smell the cedar. In a city of cement, steel and concrete and great pollution, it was wonderful. The China Dream Home is a showcase housing project manufactured out of B.C. wood. It is managed by, interestingly enough, Mr. Poole, who resides in Qualicum, which is my constituency.

British Columbia's forestry sector was a partner in developing the project. Approximately ten million homes are constructed in China each year — five times more homes than are built each year in the United States of America. Very few of these homes are built of wood, which means that there is a huge opportunity for all British Columbians if we can convince Chinese people to choose homes built of wood. British Columbia would benefit the most from a shift to wood-based construction in Chinese homes, because we are the world's largest softwood lumber exporter.

Our Dream Home project is more than just a showcase to show off what our wood can do. The project

includes many factors that will be necessary to help the people of China to start building more wood-based housing. One important component of the project is that we are helping China to make it easier for builders to construct wooden houses by helping China update their building codes and regulations. We are also helping Chinese builders, engineers, architects and tradespeople through training programs that will develop their wood-building skills. As more Chinese building trades workers are able to build better frame houses, more frame houses will be built in China, creating more demand for our lumber.

We're also creating partnerships with Chinese developers to encourage the production of more wood-frame houses in China. The firm that built the presentation centre, Jin Qiao, is now working on a new housing development, and they are constructing 205 units of wood-frame housing and are planning to build 100 units of wooden townhouses. These projects will be a great start, and I'm sure that we will look forward to many more housing developments.

We're also looking at developing a demonstration building in Shanghai to promote concrete-wood hybrid low-rise developments. As we diversify our lumber export markets, British Columbia will become less reliant on the U.S. export market. In other words, we will be less worried about softwood lumber duties, which have such a negative impact on my riding of Alberni-Qualicum and the entire province of British Columbia.

The United States will be a smaller portion of our lumber market. More markets and larger markets would help our number one industry grow and employ more people throughout British Columbia. As more lumber is produced and consumed, more loggers and people in my constituency of Alberni-Qualicum and throughout B.C. will be able to secure good-paying jobs in our forest industries.

[1055]

What should be noticed is that in some of the lumberyards in Shanghai, we had wood from APD mill in Port Alberni and the Somass mill. I hope we will see more of that lumber in China. This would help potential foresters and people in the forest industry find quality jobs that will support themselves and their families and contribute to their communities.

At this point I would like to turn over the floor to the member for Burnaby North for his thoughts and comments on this unique project when he accompanied us to China.

R. Lee: It is my pleasure to respond to the member for Alberni-Qualicum on the Dream Home China project in Shanghai.

I am glad to witness the completion of phase 1 of this project, as we participated in the opening of the presentation centre. It's now the new home for the Canada wood products service centre and offices for the Council of Forest Industries — COFI — and the B.C. Wood Specialties Group Association, the Coast

Forest Products Association, as well as other B.C. forest companies doing business in China.

It is indeed a true collaboration between the government agencies and the industries, since products from more than 13 forest companies across this province are used to finish the presentation centre. B.C. experts in building code regulations, design, construction and training are all partners in this project as well.

Now we know that this magnificent centre is managed by one of the constituents of the member for Alberni-Qualicum as well. It shows that this project is very broad-based, and it demonstrates all aspects of B.C. wood-frame construction products, technology and knowledge.

I have met many people involved in this project or in wood-frame construction in general over the last two years — for example, the management of the project partner Jin Qiao, building code developers from Forintek in UBC, wood-frame technologist trainers from BCIT, and of course the staff of Forestry Innovation Investment. Their enthusiasm in further opening up the Chinese market for B.C. lumber products is truly driving this unique project.

Local companies with headquarters in Burnaby are involved in this project as well. Last September I was at the Taiga Forest Products Aldergrove yard to see the last shipment off to complete this presentation centre.

During this trip to Shanghai many of the delegates from the B.C. forestry industries had opportunities to meet Chinese designers, architects, developers, builders, importers and researchers. This kind of interaction and relationship-building is very important and very helpful to increase the export of B.C. lumber and other forestry products.

With the member for Alberni-Qualicum and other members of the delegation, we also visited other wood housing projects in the Shanghai area. The Thames Town project in a Shanghai suburb where a Canadian builder has completed about 64 wood-frame houses in Victorian and Georgian styles of architecture demonstrated that there is a market for quality designed and constructed houses in China.

[H. Long in the chair.]

The Tecsun Homes tour in Suzhou enhanced the delegates' knowledge in the history and the efficiency of wood-frame construction in China. Some of our delegates were vivid critics of what they observed in these tours. They can offer many constructive suggestions for improvement regarding construction techniques, building materials and space utilization. Some of these opinions have been or will be communicated to the management of various projects.

[1100]

To develop the B.C. advantage in the Chinese housing market, it's essential that we are taking the lead in helping the Chinese central and local governments to develop the wood-frame construction building codes.

During this trip, the Minister of Forests took a step to further our advantages by signing an MOU with the

Shanghai municipal people's government's construction and management commission science and technology committee. The development of these local code provisions in order to adapt to local conditions and circumstances is an important advantage to be carried forward to open up the Shanghai wood-frame construction market.

I would like to thank the member for Alberni-Qualicum for highlighting the Dream Home Canada project, because it's the bridgehead for our forestry companies in the Chinese market.

G. Trumper: I would like to thank the member for Burnaby North for his comments. At this point I would like to mention how important it is that we keep looking for such opportunities in China and around the world. It is important to keep working on this opportunity for British Columbia lumber. We need to keep promoting B.C. forest products at the same time as we identify any barriers that countries have in using our products.

Without finding the barriers, we cannot work as a province to tear them down — whether skills training, new building codes or different construction techniques are what is needed for B.C. forest products to take off. Only through such programs can we hope to expand British Columbia lumber products to countries which traditionally have not used lumber in their housing construction.

I know, just as my constituents do, that B.C. forest products are an excellent product, useful in a wide variety of construction projects. With such an excellent project, the proper marketing is necessary so that people all over the world will know about our forest products and how they can take advantage of the opportunities they provide. British Columbia is taking the opportunity to demonstrate the quality of B.C. wood products, and I am certain that this will help grow our industry and our province, which will be good for every British Columbian.

Deputy Speaker: Members, that concludes private members' statements.

Motions on Notice

ROLE OF ARTS IN B.C.

S. Orr: Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity. I rise to speak to Motion 1 standing in my name on the order paper, which reads:

[Be it resolved that this House recognize that the arts are the heart and soul of our Province.]

I am very pleased to move this motion in this House and to be part of a government who recognizes the huge contribution that the arts make in all our communities around this province. Writers, poets, actors, craftspeople, artists — they are the heart and soul of our communities.

The arts can move and elevate people and communities through their craftsmanship, and this craftsman-

ship can lead to exciting community transformation. The arts are vibrant and have great popular support not only in the urban centres but also in the heartland of B.C.

For instance, Sechelt's population grows by 53 percent during the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts. Over \$30 million is brought into Merritt during the four-day Merritt Mountain Music Festival. Annually, 30,000 people attend the Kamloops Art Gallery.

In my community right here in Victoria, the arts play a huge part in the lives of us locals, but also in our tourist industry. One of our local annual events is Symphony Splash, which happens in the summer. Tens of thousands of people come from all over to listen to our symphony play from a platform in the harbour. People arrive in the morning to stake out their spot with their lawn chairs. Families gather. Tens of thousands of people of all ages come and enjoy wonderful classical music. The community gathers to enjoy each other, and this event is just another example of the heart and soul of a community gathering together.

[1105]

Some people who tend to be more interested in sports rather than the arts probably don't connect that many major sporting events have an art component and that they are actually enjoying the arts without even realizing it. A great example of a major event is the Super Bowl. People gather to watch this football game, and even those who don't particularly like football watch because of the halftime show showcasing famous artists. It is actually talked about almost as much as the game, especially in some years.

About 40 percent of the people in B.C. attend performing arts events on an annual basis. This figure does not include attendance of visual and interdisciplinary arts, which would bring this figure to well over 50 percent. Research and statistics from both federal and provincial sources indicate that our audiences cover a wide spectrum of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Interestingly, women are the majority of supporters who are actively involved in their communities. It is also interesting to note that British Columbia has the highest performing arts attendance rates in Canada if we take out pop culture stats, such as rock and roll. This growing demand for the traditional arts in B.C. is a strength that we should build on and not take for granted, especially when it comes to investment in the arts.

The arts provide more than entertainment. For example, the arts make a critical contribution to the province's economy. We are, as a government, working hard to rebuild our resource-based economy, but the information-based and creative economy is huge and growing. For instance, 63,200 people are employed in the arts and culture industry in B.C., according to the Assembly of British Columbia Arts Councils. Fifty-one percent of visitors to B.C. say that culture is a factor when choosing this province as a destination, enhancing B.C.'s cultural tourism product.

Communities with a strong arts presence are more likely to have decreased poverty rates, decreased crime

rates, greater population growth, a better sense of community identity and pride, and less intergenerational and intercultural intolerance. The arts assist in increasing the tax base and property values. Young people who are involved in the arts, whether as audience members or participants, have fewer social problems and better academic success.

Funding the arts is always a challenge. Funds are obtained from every level, but unfortunately it is much harder to get funding for the arts than for sports. Both, in my opinion, have equal value and are the best things for our communities and especially for our children. But the arts have a unique costing problem.

I always find this a good example to understand their challenges. I would like you to try to imagine this. In your daily work today, in the job that you are doing right now — the same output, the same deadlines, the same quality — try to imagine doing this job, the same job, 200 years ago. That means no phones, no computers, no BlackBerrys — sounds pretty good to me, actually — no transportation other than carriages, horses and your feet. How many people would it take to do that job, your job, today?

Well, this is what many of the arts are up against every day, because it takes just as many hours to rehearse a symphony today as it did 200 years ago. You cannot downsize *Madame Butterfly* to one chorus member. Operas, symphonies, stage plays — they are just as labour-intensive as they were 200 years ago, and they are expensive to create. When you go and see your child perform in his or her local ballet school, nothing much has changed. They are still being taught as they were 200 years ago, except the room now has electricity and heat. But to learn ballet and then perform, the human labour is still the same. It cannot be done by technology.

[1110]

We could not imagine life without these art forms. That is why funding for the arts is such a challenge. Every one of us in British Columbia is touched by the arts in some way or another. They are the very heart and soul of many of our lives. We all live busy lives these days, but it makes us feel good to watch a comedian, just to relax — to watch a play, to listen to a symphony, just to lose ourselves in another world for a short time. It rests our minds; it feeds our energy.

I look forward to hearing from my colleagues on this motion, which I believe is critical to the heart and soul and the well-being of our community.

M. Hunter: On this Valentine's Day, to speak about the heart and soul of our province is probably appropriate. I would like to thank the member for Victoria-Hillside for bringing this subject to our attention.

I was particularly interested in her reference to sport. There are some people out there who have known me for a long time, who would be surprised that I would stand to talk about the arts. They perhaps think that I thought art was conducted on the soccer pitch. As a kid I always would rather watch Manchester United than go and see the Hallé Orchestra, but

times change. We get older, and some of us smarten up, I guess. So I'm pleased to stand here today to reflect on the subject of this motion.

You know, "the arts" is very difficult to define. Unlike perhaps any other dimension of human existence, the arts capture the old saying that one man's treasure is another man's garbage — or one woman's treasure is another woman's garbage. It captures the expression: beauty is in the eye of the beholder. What you like is probably something that I don't, and what I like may well be something that you don't.

I think that it is those differences amongst us as human beings and the way we see movement — the way we see pictures and any kind of artistic expression or cultural expression.... It is those differences amongst us that make the arts so vital and such an important part of our lives and why this motion is important to our province.

You know, I think that the arts tend to be taken for granted. Music is all around us. Rarely in this chamber.... I've heard some members try to sing, and that's probably just as well that we keep music out of here. We don't even stop to think about the music we hear in our daily lives because it is all around us. Graphics, pictures, traditional painting, banners that appear in our streets.... They brighten up our homes; they brighten up our offices; they brighten up our communities. They are the arts, and all that they mean to you and to me is all around us. I think we barely stop to think about it, but we should. This is the opportunity to do so, if only briefly.

On Vancouver Island the arts and cultural community is extremely active. I want to spend just a little time to talk about and praise those who are making our lives richer through their contribution to the arts community.

The member for Victoria-Hillside talked about the importance of this activity for tourism, and she is absolutely right. One of the expressions of interest in arts and culture on Vancouver Island is, indeed, called the Arts and Cultural Highway. This is a loose-knit organization of people who are trying to promote arts and culture tourism. There are lots of places for them to see, from Victoria to Campbell River to Port Hardy. It is an interesting expression of how arts and culture can actually build our community through tourism.

In my own city of Nanaimo, the arts and cultural community is very, very hard at work. For a city of 80,000 people and a region of perhaps 120,000, it is amazing how much performing arts we have in Nanaimo. We have independent theatre companies. We have the Port Theatre, which hosts hundreds — and I mean hundreds — of events a year. The place is busy 365 days. We have very active theatre and music schools at Malaspina University College. We have the Vancouver Island Symphony orchestra, whose home is in Nanaimo. I don't think there are too many places in Canada that could boast to host a full symphony in a community of our size, but there they are — and extremely well supported, I might add.

[1115]

In the visual arts we have the CIBC centre for the arts in Nanaimo. We have private and public art galleries that are boosting our community, bringing people in, providing services to the arts community.

Nanaimo is famous for music. I think most members will appreciate and know of Diana Krall, a native daughter of Nanaimo. Some members, who have an interest in perhaps a different style of music, might know of David Gogo and the great qualities he brings to the music scene in this province. I mentioned the Vancouver Island Symphony orchestra. Marlin Wolfe, who is the conductor of that orchestra, has been a tutor and a mentor to many, many musicians. Nanaimo is justifiably well known for its musical prowess.

Books are part of the arts and culture community. In Nanaimo we have a rather interesting book scene. We have used bookstores. Now, why would I stop to speak about used bookstores? Well, it turns out that used bookstores are an important part of our culture. Used bookstores in Nanaimo specialize in particular subjects to do with the Pacific Northwest. One in particular focuses on Pacific Northwest culture. People come from all around North America. They phone from all around North America to bookstores in Nanaimo that specialize in whatever it is that these people are interested in. It's an attribute of our community that is perhaps not recognized by many people who just see a used bookstore as that. They are more, and I think that credit goes to the people who are involved in those businesses and providing that kind of service to consumers all around this continent from my home community.

We have an active film commission in Nanaimo that has international accreditation — seeking out locations in our community, bringing film-makers to the mid-part of Vancouver Island to add to what Vancouver Island already offers to the film world.

We have a museum which, again for a community our size, is extremely well put together thanks to a tremendous amount of volunteer time put into that museum over a long period of years by people in Nanaimo who recognized the importance of art and culture and history — the original coalminers.

Mr. Speaker, you may be interested to know that in November of 2004, I attended a celebration of the 150th anniversary of the landing of the first immigrants on the ship *Princess Royal*, which landed in Nanaimo at the time when Hudson's Bay had a small fort called the Nanaimo Bastion in place. Again, that is a history. It's culture; it's the arts. It's the photographs, the drawings, the artifacts of those years long ago that add to the quality of life and are exhibited in our museum. It's a museum that, by the way, is scheduled to expand in the new Nanaimo centre. The Nanaimo District Museum has been allocated something in the order of 15,000 to 17,000 square feet of exhibit space. That's quite a challenge for a community our size to fill that much room with the artifacts that they have from our past, including the past of our first nations people.

In all of these areas that I've mentioned, people are working to try and improve the quality of our life — to

provide services, to provide entertainment, to provide the backdrop to what I said are things we don't normally think about.

I think we need to stop, as well, and remember that the Winter Olympics and Paralympic Games are coming to B.C. — and a reminder of how that event is going to benefit our arts and culture community. I am involved with our local Spirit of 2010 committee in Nanaimo, working with LegaciesNow. That activity is going to bring a new focus in our community and, I think, around this province to arts and culture. To go back to the theme that the member for Victoria-Hillside talked about and I started with, the involvement of LegaciesNow, the activities, non-sporting activities around the Olympic and Paralympic Games, are actually going to serve to bring sport, arts and culture together.

I know that artists struggle. They always have. It's not new that artists are trying to eke out a living. I think that if you go back through the pages of history, you will find that artists like Beethoven and Mozart actually struggled in their lives too. They were sponsored by people who had money. They had mentors who had money, and the same is true in British Columbia.

[1120]

I had the opportunity just a few days ago to visit the Victoria film festival to see a movie made by a person I know, a man by the name of David Vaisbord, who is a struggling B.C. film-maker. He is recording people in this province and our history, as we speak.

I think it's important we recognize, as the member for Victoria-Hillside said, that as we rebuild this province and as we create the foundations for a strong and vibrant arts and culture community, we remember people like David Vaisbord and the work he is doing to make our province a richer place — and a richer place to leave our children.

As we move into the golden decade that we are building in this government, I agree with the motion that we need to support our arts community. We have the capacity to do it. We have the desire to do it, and we have the product to support. So it is with pleasure that I would like to say I speak in favour of this motion. I want to thank the member for Victoria-Hillside for giving me the opportunity to speak about things that, quite often, I don't think about and I take for granted.

G. Trumper: I rise today to support this motion from the member for Victoria-Hillside.

You know, arts and culture are the heart and soul of any society, and our province is no different. Probably one of the greatest gifts that I got from my schooling, which was some time ago, was that we were able to be taken to the art galleries in London. We were taken to the symphony concerts in London. We went to some of the other concerts that took place — the Promenade concerts. We were able to have specific people come into our school to give orchestral concerts. We had choirs coming in.

Although at that time in my schooling it probably didn't register as well as it might have, it's something

that has stayed with me all through my life. I really appreciate the fact that somebody took the effort to try and teach me some of the wonderful benefits that come from the opportunity to be able to participate in some of these great gifts that other people have, who are able to contribute to the wealth in the arts and culture parts of our lives.

Every part of British Columbia has some special gift or area in arts and culture that they excel in, and I just want to talk about my riding a little bit. In Qualicum, which is on the east side of my riding, they have a thriving theatre group. They have one in the winter. They have one under the tent in the summer. We get the Victoria Symphony coming up once or twice a year to the civic centre, which we're able to enjoy. They have wonderful artists. They have wonderful people — potters — in the area, and it is known as an area to come to, to be able to enjoy that part of life.

As we move across the Island and come to Port Alberni, we have a very lively theatre that was the beneficiary of a considerable amount of money left as a legacy from a resident of the valley. They were able to convert and improve the small Capital Theatre that seats about 300 people but now is a small theatre.... It produces wonderful plays, wonderful entertainment. Just recently, they did *Sing a Song of Sixpence*, which played every weekend for about five weeks.

We also have wonderful music programs in our school districts, in school districts 69 and 70, and many of those bands and choirs have won national awards. In fact, in their high school jazz program in school district 69, one of the young men who plays the trumpet actually played at the Grammy awards. He was a representative from British Columbia and had the great opportunity to go down and play at the Grammy awards just recently. We have wonderful choirs, both on the east side of the Island and in the Alberni Valley, that are strongly supported by the communities, and it just adds to the richness.

[1125]

We also are known particularly in the Alberni Valley as a community that has great sports facilities. We do have many provincial and national events that take place. Maybe that's one of the things we are known for, but at the same time we are known for many of the cultural activities that enrich us.

We have a museum in the Alberni Valley that is known as one of the best museums in the province for its size. More or less every exhibit they have in that particular museum is on view, and they are very fortunate to get many travelling exhibits to this particular museum, which sometimes other communities are not able to get.

All these make up the mosaic of our society. All the things that we have in our communities — whether it is sports, theatre, libraries, the aboriginal community.... The Tseshah band, a nation in Port Alberni, as a matter of fact, received funding from the province as they were building a longhouse on their particular reserve.

There is a community — the Huu-ay-aht band on the west coast of Vancouver Island — that has now

discovered a very, very ancient village on the west coast of Vancouver Island, which has become a heritage site for Canada. We have the McLean mill in the Alberni Valley, which is a heritage site. We actually have the Brant Festival in April, which is on the east coast of Vancouver Island, which is also part of our culture and is part of the arts.

There are so many things that enrich our lives, and it would be most unfortunate if we were not able to build on those gifts that people give us, on the facilities we have, for the programs that we have. With the Olympics 2010 taking place, arts and culture will be a strong part of that. I look forward to being able to participate in many of those events and to seeing our arts and culture grow in this province. It's one of the things that are so valuable to our society, and I certainly do support the member for Victoria-Hillside's motion.

J. Bray: I, too, rise in support of the member for Victoria-Hillside's motion. I thank her very much, as others have, for raising what is often a very critical part of our community life but one that sometimes falls a bit below the radar screen.

When we talk about infrastructure in our communities, we talk about sewers and roads and public transportation and some of the bricks and mortar that we see in our community and how important they are. But really, the arts provide opportunities for social infrastructure in our communities that I think are equally critical to actually having a community that does have, as the member from Hillside says in her motion, a heart and a soul.

You can have bricks and mortar and buildings, and you can have buses and ferries and all those types of things. But if you don't have the arts as an active part of your community that connects people from different cultures, different generations, different socioeconomic backgrounds and educational backgrounds, you really have no heart and soul in your community. It is something that I think we should continually be pushing up to the top — whether we're in a large urban centre, like we are in Victoria, or in smaller communities in the capital region, like Sooke or North Saanich, which also can provide arts opportunities that really connect people together.

In my few minutes I'd like to focus on the heart and soul of a community and arts with respect to the most precious asset we have, which is our children. Children often, as they learn how to make their way in the world, learn how to talk, learn how to use the alphabet and numeracy....

One of the best ways that children, especially young children, can learn to express themselves is through the arts — not necessarily in absolutely formal settings. But children love to draw. They love to paint; they love to get in the mud and make mud pies; they love to dance; they love to play. The arts is an area that children can really blossom and start to express who they are to their community long before they might actually have cognitive understanding of some of those self-identifiers. So strong support in a strong arts infrastructure really creates the first good opportunity for

our children to engage in their larger community as individuals and make contributions that really enrich the lives of everybody else in the community.

[1130]

Certainly in Victoria-Beacon Hill, we are blessed with a lot of arts opportunities for families and young people to participate in. One that was recently in the news was the Luminara lantern festival, which is a festival in Beacon Hill Park that allows children and families to build lanterns. Then on a midsummer's night in July, up to 20,000 people parade through Beacon Hill Park at dusk with their lanterns.

Of course, the night is magical, and there is music and all sorts of other activities that go on. Really, what is so great about Luminara is that there are free workshops provided around the city, where families can actually build the lanterns themselves. There is no cost, so all families are equally able to participate. It is the fact that children are creating something with their parents or with their brothers and sisters or their aunts and uncles or their grandparents, which is a way for them to express their individuality and then display it with 20,000 other people — people they have never met before, people they may never meet again. But all have a collective desire to participate on that beautiful night in July.

Luminara, which was at risk of being cancelled because of a variety of issues.... I was very proud that the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services was able to respond with a \$25,000 grant to help ensure that Luminara would carry forward. It's great that we have so many community partners that have also stepped up to the plate and, most importantly, that the board of the Inter-Cultural Association reversed its decision. This great family arts festival and cultural festival will carry on.

In fact, the Inter-Cultural Association provides another great opportunity for families and for children to learn about the arts and learn about culture. That, of course, is that every summer here in our Inner Harbour we have the ICA Folkfest, which allows for dance and music and food from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds to be displayed and really for children to see all the great wonderful opportunities in music and dance that various cultures provide to our community — as Victorians and Canadians, something that we celebrate with great pride.

There are also some other events that occur, which really are so important from the point of view of the arts. In my riding we have the Belfry Theatre, which this government has supported with major grants for renovations, that provides all sorts of opportunities for not only just the actual plays they put on but workshops and opportunities for young people to become involved in theatre, either as actors or writers or stagehands, and to really be involved with what is a very exciting and rewarding area of the arts.

Langham Court Theatre, which is a smaller neighbourhood theatre, provides the same opportunities in beautiful Rockland. That is something that I know many of my constituents support and enjoy go-

ing to. I was very pleased that recently through gaming proceeds, they received \$355,000 for major capital renovation to further enhance the experience of families going to see live theatre.

I have spoken many times before about the greater Victoria Art Gallery, which draws over 55,000 people annually to displays. In the last couple of years, the greater Victoria Art Gallery has moved on to the national stage by doing some major renovations that allow them to take some significant displays — including the Group of Seven, the French Impressionists and others — that have really exposed Victorians, kids and adults alike, to some of the greatest art that exists in North America — again in the wonderful neighbourhood of Rockland in my riding. Certainly I will continue to support the art gallery as it works to continue its outreach, bringing in children for art classes, drawing classes and art appreciation classes and reaching out to the schools to provide that entire avenue of the arts to our children.

[1135]

Of course, the Victoria Conservatory of Music is becoming one of the nation's best teaching opportunities for young musicians in the classical music genre. We are now, in Victoria, producing some of the best young musicians in western Canada from the Victoria Conservatory of Music. But whether or not they become great concert pianists or they just spend a few years learning how to play violin, we know that when children are involved in music, it's important for their education. They do better at school, it gives them a focus, and it gives them something to enjoy. But of course, music is one of those things that one can enjoy throughout their entire life, so children benefit immensely from exposure to music, and the Victoria Conservatory does a great job of that.

We also have the grand Royal Theatre in my riding, downtown Victoria, and Pacific Opera Victoria, which really has become a national leader in putting on innovative operas and creative operas for those on Vancouver Island. Why the arts are important in that context is that not only is it a great privilege for local people to be able to go and see Pacific Opera Victoria, but the arts also provide that opportunity for others to come from other parts of Vancouver Island or, in fact, the mainland to visit Victoria, spend some dollars and provide that tourism draw as well. Of course, we are a tourist town, so the arts support tourism, and the arts are the heart and soul of our community.

Another really critical arts event in greater Victoria — and I know that the member from Hillside is a big supporter of this — is that every August B.C. Day weekend we have the Symphony Splash. The Victoria Symphony, out of their own operating funds, rents a barge, brings out the full symphony and fireworks, and we have about 40,000 people who will sit out on the lawns of the Legislature in the Inner Harbour for a free concert celebrating classical music. It always finishes with quite a bang and fireworks, but it exposes lots of children to the wonders of music — live music and classical music — and, I think, every year spurs fami-

lies on to explore music together. Children are a big part of Symphony Splash and a big part of that B.C. Day long weekend. Really, it is the music that becomes the draw for what is a great community event — as the member says, the heart and soul of the community.

Finally, we also have to recognize that a growing area is the film industry. That is arts, but it also employs many, many people now in this community on a full-time basis. Its direct financial impact is about \$25 million a year. Its direct and indirect is upwards of \$75 million a year into this local community. We have actors; we have writers; we have producers; we have boom operators; we have camera operators; we have caterers. It is a vibrant community involved in the art of film-making — commercials, feature films, television, shorts. It used to be that people would have to travel over to Vancouver to get work. They now actually live and work here permanently, and they are becoming a vibrant part of our economic family here on southern Vancouver Island and also are producing world-class films and world-class television that the rest of the world can enjoy. That, too, is becoming part of the heart and soul of greater Victoria — our film industry.

We are very fortunate in Victoria and the south region to have such a great arts infrastructure, and I'm very pleased that the member for Victoria-Hillside has raised this. Really, a strong arts community and a strong arts program do provide a heart and soul and identity for a community that carries it beyond just the bricks and mortar of the infrastructure.

I hope all members will support this motion.

K. Stewart: I fully support the motion put forward by the member for Victoria-Hillside, although I must disagree with the definition between sports and art. How can you take an event like the Super Bowl — the greatest sporting event in the world, 60 minutes of macho mano-a-mano — and then take seven minutes of some aging British rocker coming up at halftime and call it an art event? It's still a sporting event, although I'm fully supportive of arts.

[1140]

On the topic of arts, art has been so important to us as a culture. It's a reflection of our humanness, representing our fears, our hopes, our desires. It's presented through many mediums — through painting, through dance, through cinematography and through photography. This social commentary has also kept a historical record through arts, and it represents our ever-changing nature as we move through the ages.

Artists are some of the bravest and boldest citizens of the world. Historically, the art that came through during the times of the repression by things such as the Inquisition.... The bravery of those who made those wonderful paintings that have a historical reference for all of us to show the desire of humans in looking at fear and standing up to that type of repression is, I think, a great commentary on the artists of the world.

Arts come to us today in many forms. I'd just like to take a minute to talk locally of a new arts and cultural centre that we've recently had built in our community

of Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows. It has a wonderful theatre there where people can express themselves in song, in dance and through theatrics. They have a pottery area there where people can express themselves through pottery, a carving area where people can do carvings, a photography centre and an art gallery.

The people of Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows strongly support arts and culture in our area, as witnessed on Saturday night. We had an art auction at a local gallery, with over 200 people attending. After looking at my Visa receipts on Sunday morning, I think I can now be called a patron of the arts. It was great to see the type of support that we have for the arts in our community. It's just a whole area of culture that needs to be nourished and supported. It's also an area where, as mentioned by the member across the floor, with regards to our children, they can develop. We all know that too much work makes Jack a boring lad, and so we have to ensure that we're culturally diversified and that after we have our hard day of work, we have an opportunity to relax and enjoy — within ourselves many times — with arts.

D. Jarvis: I wholeheartedly agree with my colleague from Victoria-Hillside, as well, that the arts are the heart and soul of a community. Also, the fact that today is Valentine's Day.... This motion is most appropriate, I should say. By the way, I'm amenable to anyone that wants to send me chocolates.

In my riding in North Vancouver, we are fortunate to have so many opportunities available for children and adults alike to be exposed to the arts in all its forms. For example, our children in school district 44 have a unique program available to them called Artists for Kids Trust. This trust was established in 1989 between some of Canada's finest artists and the North Van school district. Patron artists, such as the late Toni Onley, donate their original work and the proceeds for sale, which give thousands of students the opportunity to attend summer camps, after-school art programs and gallery programs. As a matter of fact, my granddaughter Diandra goes every year to the arts school and has been exposed to and had the privilege to have art lessons from Toni Onley and Bateman and Shadbolt, etc.

The art itself is uniquely Canadian. Every time I go to the gallery up at Lucas Centre, I'm also impressed at the unbelievable talent that's exhibited by those people, as I mentioned — like Bateman, Shadbolt and Reid, who are just a few of the long list of generous patrons who have generously exposed our children to a world of expression.

Art, of course, is not just paint on canvas. The performing arts — dance, theatre and music — should be encouraged in addition to the three Rs for our children. They get the understanding that a whole education should encompass mind, body and soul. On the artists-for-children aspect of it, the school that we have is run by Mr. Bill MacDonald, who's a working artist himself and also a recipient of the B.C. Queen's Jubilee medal.

Art centres us as a community and encourages learning, creating and simply enjoying art in all its forms. I support the member for Victoria-Hillside's motion.

[1145]

R. Sultan: I'm delighted to respond to the motion of the member for Victoria-Hillside that arts are the heart and soul of our province. That's certainly true of the North Shore, as the member for North Vancouver-Seymour has just illustrated.

To add to what my good friend has already said, I would just point out, for example in the performing arts, the North Vancouver Centennial Theatre, which for 35 years has enriched our community and which in March will again be the home of a celebration of the Iranian New Year, the NoRooz festival. Come and learn about the magnificent Persian culture in our presence.

Over on the West Vancouver side of the Capilano we have the Music Box on Argyle, which is home of the annual Harmony Arts Festival. The Harmony Arts Festival, a multifaceted cultural event down on the beach at Ambleside, has such shows as, for example, Jim Byrnes, whom I had the pleasure of introducing from the stage with his version of Missoura — not Missouri, but Missoura — blues. He had about a thousand citizens dancing on the sand and grass from age five to 85 until the sun went down. Life doesn't get much better than that. Actually it does, because in West Vancouver we now also have the \$12 million Kay Meek Centre for the Performing Arts. I recommend catching the upcoming production of *Grease*. We can't promise John Travolta, but I'm sure they will do very, very well.

On the painting side and on sculpture, we have the North Vancouver Community Arts Council with a gallery, an art rental program and programs for youth at risk — prime movers in what is estimated to be North Vancouver's \$13 million annual arts industry. Again, on the West Vancouver side, with over 50,000 visitors a year, we have the Ferry Building Gallery on the beach, which claims the highest attendance of any art gallery in British Columbia. If the coordinator, the formidable Ruth Payne says so, I'm sure that must be true. We also have over on that side of the water the Silk Purse Gallery, a charming seaside cottage which puts on such events as the visual art display by Eileen Siu-Yue Fong, who does Chinese brush painting and calligraphy.

Finally, back on the North Vancouver side we have the public art program of North Vancouver district and city. They put up public art everywhere, including a statue of Walter in bronze. Walter was a senior citizen sitting there by himself, and one day he disappeared. Who stole Walter? Well, a North Vancouver bus driver spotted Walter down on Hastings Street sitting beside another senior citizen in bronze, Agnes. The perpetrator wrote a letter to the *North Shore News* saying he had done that because he thought Walter looked a bit lonely.

On the writing side, we've got a distinguished list of North Shore characters. I'll just mention a few of

them. Douglas Coupland, author of *Generation X* and frequent contributor to the *New York Times* and the *New Republic*, graduated from Sentinel School in West Vancouver. He envisages the growth of Vancouver into a city-state and is one of our longer-term conceptual thinkers. In his eyes Ottawa has become irrelevant, and some would say that's already happened.

Michael Heatherington, author of *The Late Night Caller*, a collection of short stories. Blanche Howard, whose full-length play, *A Celibate Season*, was produced in Vancouver. Anosh Irani, born and raised in Bombay — his play *Manja's Circus* was commissioned by the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. Doreen Armitage, who specializes in local history. Finally, Daniel Francis, together with Vicky Bazwits, over a 12-year period, produced the magnificent *Encyclopedia of British Columbia* — 828 pages in living colour, plus a CD-ROM they throw in at an extra charge. That encyclopedia should be in every British Columbia home.

[1150]

Finally, to turn to a dimension beyond the member for Victoria-Hillside's hearts and minds, let's just talk about the economics of the arts in conclusion. Why are homes selling for a million dollars in the North Vancouver-Handsworth School catchment area? In part because of the richness of the extracurricular program, one hallmark of which is what participants claim might be the best music program in the province. Arts contributing to real estate wealth — it sounds like a win-win to me.

Consider Mayor Ron Wood's project to breathe some needed zip into West Vancouver's Ambleside business area. He sees West Vancouver by the sea becoming world-famous for its artistic amenities. Arts contribute to commercial community renewal. Sounds like another win-win to me. Such win-wins merit municipal support. Each year North Vancouver city and district combined contribute about \$21 per citizen to support of the arts. That's a modest fee indeed, considering the magnificent multiplayer contribution.

The member for Victoria-Hillside has expressed it very well. Arts are the heart and soul of our province, and we certainly believe that on the North Shore.

L. Mayencourt: It gives me great pleasure to stand and speak in favour of this motion. I do so, first off, because I really do believe in the arts community and how much it does contribute to British Columbia, but also because I have British Columbia's...

Vancouver-Burrard is probably one of the centres, I would say, of the arts and culture in British Columbia. We have things like the Vancouver Opera, the symphony, the Arts Club Theatre, Ballet B.C. and many, many others that really make our community a rich and exciting place to be.

I know that in addition to the wonderful things this does for ordinary people and for our artistic community, it also adds to the attractiveness of Vancouver and of British Columbia to companies seeking to invest here. I know that companies that have come here, like eBay and others, have come to Vancouver simply because there is a wealth of cultural activities available, and sporting activities as well. That has been a very, very important part of the reasons why British Columbia has been able to attract even greater numbers of businesses to our community.

As well, I think that when we look at the kinds of things that have been so important to us in the last little while.... We think about the education announcement in the past week, where arts and culture was a very significant part of that. We have talked about the support that we have made toward organizations like Arts Umbrella, which has reached out to young people from inner-city schools and made sure that arts education is accessible to every kid in British Columbia. I think that's a comment on how well this government views this particular issue, and I am very proud to stand here in support of the member's motion.

I think this is a timely motion. I look forward to continued discussion around the arts community and the cultural communities in British Columbia in the coming weeks, and I think it is a very exciting time for all of us that care so deeply about the arts.

Deputy Speaker: The member for Victoria-Hillside closes debate.

S. Orr: I would like to thank the members very much for supporting the resolution. I would just like to recognize, actually, the member for Fort Langley-Aldergrove, the Solicitor General, twitching at the lack of recognition for country music. I would like to put it on the record, for the member for Fort Langley-Aldergrove, that country music rules.

I would like to move the motion: "Be it resolved that this House recognize that the arts are the heart and soul of our Province."

Motion approved.

Hon. R. Coleman moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. today.

The House adjourned at 11:55 a.m.