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6TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21, 2005

The House met at 10:04 a.m.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

Prayers.

Introductions by Members

D. MacKay: In the gallery today is the mayor of Telkwa, Her Worship Sharon Hartwell. I would ask that the House please make her welcome.

[1005]

Orders of the Day

Hon. G. Bruce: I call members' statements.

Private Members' Statements

JUNK SCIENCE: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?

B. Bennett: The title of my topic this morning is "Junk Science: What is it Good For?" Science is defined as the observation, description, experimental investigation and theoretical explanation of phenomena. Science stands up to peer reviews by leading experts in a field and to rigorous testing. Science is not about media campaigns, emotional appeals or politics.

My statement today is about what is commonly known as junk science. The "junk" is defined as used, discarded materials. So junk science is a collection of observations, descriptions, investigations and explanations of phenomena that are, or should be, discarded.

My focus today is on the perfidious use of junk science to base public policy decisions on. I'm starting with some interesting opinions or quotations. Here's my first quotation: "I suspect that eradicating smallpox was wrong. It played a role in balancing ecosystems." That was John Davis, editor of *Earth First! Journal*, who said that. That quotation is important, I suggest, for two messages: first, that the value of human life is less than the value of so-called natural ecosystems; and second, that we should worship what is natural, meaning whatever has no human content, even if it's a deadly virus.

Here are some more gems. "Restoring biodiversity will require the removal of existing dams." That's from *Saving Nature's Legacy* by Reed Noss and Allen Cooper-rider. What it means is that the standard of living achieved in North America by the invention of electricity and the construction of infrastructure, such as hydroelectric dams, is bad and that natural is good.

Here's Christine Stewart, Canadian Environment minister, quoted in the *Calgary Herald* on December 14, 1998: "No matter if the science is all phony, there are collateral environmental benefits.... Climate change provides the greatest chance to bring about justice and equality in the world."

Here's one of my favourites: "In ten years all-important animal life in the sea will be extinct. Large

areas of coastline will have to be evacuated because of the stench of dead fish." That was the famous Paul Ehrlich at Earth Day 1970, he of the well-known but now discredited book *The Population Bomb*.

Here's another one: "The collective needs of non-human species must take precedence over the needs of human beings." That was Reed Noss of the Wildlands Project. The Wildlands Project has as its goals: to create protected areas up all of what they call the spine of the continent — the Rocky Mountains, where I live; to do away with all resource extraction; and to the greatest extent possible, to do away with humans from this landscape — except, of course, for a few of their closest friends who might be allowed a rafting company that will cater to wealthy urbanites, as has happened in the Tatshenshini.

Finally, Canada's own Maurice Strong, perhaps when he thought no one was listening: "Isn't the only hope for the planet that the industrialized civilizations collapse, and isn't it our responsibility to bring that about?" Again, with Maurice Strong we see the revulsion that this group of people seems to feel for human beings and human society. They clearly don't subscribe to a conventional view of progress. They are romantics. Henry David Thoreau was their hero, not Albert Einstein.

As for me, I subscribe to the view that people are a part of nature and that the two can thrive together and, in fact, are intended to thrive together. I'm not a scientist, but I've read a lot over the years about the natural world. In earlier days I was a fishing lodge operator, and I learned a lot about the biology of lake trout. I had the first total catch-and-release freshwater sport fishing lodge in Canada in the early 1980s. I consider myself a conservationist, but I am edgy about being called an environmentalist.

I believe in protection of the natural world to the extent it needs protection, but the idea that any human interaction with nature is bad is antithetical to my own experience. The Bible makes it plain that we are the stewards of the Earth, and as such, our obligation is not negotiable. However, we are not obliged to preserve the natural world in some kind of frozen inertia at arm's length from human activity.

[1010]

Science is, or it should be, the foundation for the management policies used in British Columbia to guide human interaction with nature, resource extraction, management of wildlife, management of water and so on. However, in fact, political correctness and special interests often drive our management of environmental issues as much as science. I highly recommend a lecture that Michael Crichton gave in January, which he called "Aliens Cause Global Warming." The thesis of Crichton's lecture is that hard science is losing ground to junk science in terms of what is used by governments to create public policy. Mr. Crichton argues that science is being seduced by the ancient lures of politics and publicity.

Let me remind you of the quotation that I gave just a few seconds ago of Christine Stewart, then federal

Minister of the Environment. Ms. Stewart, a nurse by training with international experience in Africa, believed and said openly that it was okay to subvert the science because the end result was that the world would be a more just place, presumably because the trading of carbon credits would equalize economies between the developing and developed world.

Let me provide you yet another quotation but this time from Cathy McGregor, former B.C. Minister of Environment, Land and Parks: "The principle of Y-to-Y is a good one. That's why we use it, in fact, when we're doing land use planning. Y-to-Y is an initiative that has been put together by a number of environmental interests, and I think it's a philosophy that one should support."

During the 1990s the NDP governments of British Columbia sacrificed over 13,000 forestry jobs to the altar of political correctness, and they willingly capitulated to anti-use groups that based their public campaigns on junk science. These anti-use movements used sophisticated marketing campaigns to mobilize large blocks of misinformed urban voters who, in turn, pressure their politicians to craft public policy in a way that rewards the efforts of these anti-use groups.

Heather Myers and Tracy Summerville in 2004 published a report entitled *Anti-use Campaigns and Resource Communities: The Consequences of Political Correctness*. They point out that stakeholders in resource-based communities are often left out of the loop when anti-use groups are lobbying governments to make decisions that would stop or limit resource extraction.

Just before the 2001 election the NDP government, with the support of the incumbent MLA for East Kootenay, announced that they were setting aside a huge area of the Flathead and Elk valleys. No socioeconomic evaluation was done to determine the impacts on the economy or on our communities. No public meetings were held. Local environmentalists were, of course, involved. Local miners, loggers, trappers and recreators were not even told of the impending loss of thousands of hectares of land that support hundreds of families in the East Kootenay. The government of the day and the MLA for East Kootenay were willing to sacrifice the working families of the region on the basis of what some U.S. environmentalists from Montana wanted.

Deputy Speaker: Member, your time has expired.

D. MacKay: Just to carry on with what the member for East Kootenay was talking about, and that is the junk science. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to junk science. I guess probably the best thing I could do is take a look at the *Vancouver Sun* of just this past weekend and read the story in there from Patrick Moore and his headline, where it says that zero-tolerance environmental activists have abandoned science for sensationalism, threatening the health of the Earth and its people. That just goes along with what the member for East Kootenay spoke about. More specifically, he goes on to say the prognosis: "Environmen-

talism has turned into anti-globalization and anti-industry. Activists have abandoned science in favour of sensationalism."

I'd like to be just a little more specific, if I could. What I'd like to do is talk about the Tulsequah Chief mine near Atlin. It's a topic that has been discussed for years and years. Redfern Resources have spent around \$13 million on doing environmental studies, trying to mitigate the environmental impact on the proposed minesite.

Again, when I go back to the *Vancouver Sun* of this past weekend, I just need to look and read Stephen Hume's article. There is a story in there where he goes on to say: "Opponents say it threatens an endangered caribou herd. It would destroy the traditional way of life for the Tlingit people, and it could never be decommissioned as claimed." He goes on to talk about the Taku River Tlingit people and how it's going to destroy their way of life.

In the same paper we find a big story where Robert Kennedy Jr. joins to stop a B.C. mine. Now we have an American coming up into our country, proposing to put a stop to a project that has seen \$13 million go to mitigate environmental issues. We have a well-known activist and environmentalist, who happens to have been the son of a well-known American politician. It's interesting, because we see Mr. Kennedy's name mentioned in the newspaper, but we don't seem to have any feedback from the Taku River Tlingit people. I'm going to comment on that in my closing comments.

[1015]

I have a letter here from a Taku River Tlingit member who went back to Ottawa this past weekend to give his input into the Canadian environmental assessment review that was taking place. But I'd just like to talk for a few moments about the Tulsequah Chief. It's about 160 kilometres south of Atlin. Atlin is a small community in the northwest part of our province, and its livelihood depends on mining. Atlin is where it is today because of the mining industry. So the people in Atlin have a lot of interest in what's going on in this project that's been studied to death.

Two years ago I went to Atlin, and at the same time the House announced the project approval certificate renewal for the Tulsequah Chief mine. I was able to tell the people from Atlin that the project had once again been approved by our province. Just recently, the Supreme Court of Canada has said that the environmental review process that took place in our province met the need to consult with the aboriginal people in the northern part of our province — namely, the Taku River Tlingit. This is being challenged again because of junk science.

We always talk about the last pristine wilderness or the last pristine river in our province. Science doesn't mention that. But as I said in my opening comments, I did want to put in a couple of comments here from a member of the Taku River Tlingit nation. Robert Kennedy gets coverage in the *Vancouver Sun*, but this member got absolutely no coverage. They wouldn't

even acknowledge him in Ottawa. His name is Yana Tan. He happens to be a Taku River Tlingit member. He's the great grandson of Chief Taku Jack, a highly respected leader from our past.

I went through his notes and his presentation that was not accepted, and I'm going to read some of the highlights. He says:

"As an aboriginal person, I am naturally unable to allow deliberate destruction of our environment for any price tag. However, I am also an independent-thinking human being who doesn't give into fear spread through campaigns of misinformation."

Also in his presentation he says:

"On the reserve, primary wage earners are forced away because there is no sustainable employment within the Atlin region for the Tlingit people. We will not stand idly by and watch environmentalists usher in another 150 years of social and economic suffering. Our people require jobs that lead to real development for them, not jobs that pay minimum wage because that's all conservation economic development issues can afford."

"Our support for the Tulsequah Chief project is another extension of our traditional trading culture — one we see as being very good for the Taku River Tlingit nation as a whole."

Deputy Speaker: With concluding remarks, the member for East Kootenay.

B. Bennett: I just want to conclude my statement today by talking about a subject that is near and dear to my heart. I feel compelled to talk about it, because the subject of hunting just doesn't get the kind of intelligent and objective discussion and debate that it deserves.

There is considerable science showing that hunting is a very effective means to manage wildlife populations. Species like elk, deer, moose and bear, under the right habitat circumstances, will increase in population to the point where disease and human-wildlife conflict become serious problems. We have some examples of those serious problems in the province today.

It is legal to hunt in British Columbia, and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection even includes the expansion of hunting and fishing opportunities as a goal in its annual service plan. If the truth be known, all governments in North America are politically anxious about hunting. Why? Well, not because there is a better way to control white-tailed deer or Rocky Mountain elk populations, but because of the efforts of anti-hunting campaigns.

In my region of the East Kootenay we have the highest population of non-coastal grizzly bears in North America. Experienced back-country guides in the Elk Valley can show you between ten and 40 different grizzly bears in one day in the spring. Yet as I walk to my apartment here in Victoria, I pass a bus shelter that has an expensive colour photo of a grizzly bear and a sentimental slogan that decries the hunting of grizzlies. Even some of my colleagues have called for a stop to what they refer to as the slaughter of grizzly bears.

[1020]

There is no science that shows existing hunting policies in B.C. are harming wildlife populations. I think one of the greatest challenges for governments today is the lack of experience of the land by people who vote and the general lack of scientific literacy about environmental topics. It's much easier for special interest groups to convince a mainly urban public that grizzly bears in B.C. are being decimated by hunters and guides if you don't know that the grizzly populations are actually growing in many areas of the province.

It's also much easier to convince voters in the lower mainland of B.C. that large cutblocks in the East Kootenay are a travesty of nature if they don't know that the Rocky Mountain Trench burned every ten to 15 years for centuries and that a large cutblock, if burned over, creates the natural grasslands that once covered the region. It's much easier to persuade people that trapping is a vicious, antisocial behaviour done by red-neck rural Neanderthals if you don't know that furbearer populations benefit from a regular cull.

Governments have an obligation to ensure that important public policy questions are decided on the best available science. Governments also have an obligation to fund research to determine what that science is. Our government should look for more resources to invest in research.

But governments should not actually do the research. An institute for environmental research associated with our university science departments should be set up in British Columbia and be funded by government, industry and foundations. It should be independent and apolitical. As for junk science, what is it good for? Like the song goes: absolutely nothing.

MANDATORY RETIREMENT

K. Whittred: I am pleased to rise in the House today to talk about the subject of mandatory retirement.

I'm told very frequently, on the news and so on, that 40 is the new 30. If that is true, then 70 surely must be the new 60. British Columbians are healthier than ever before. They are living longer, and many, many people beyond the age of 65 are certainly more than able but also willing to contribute to their society. This is a topic that comes frequently to my office and one which I have been determined to act upon.

British Columbia is undergoing, like all of our society, a great demographic change. This presents us with challenges and opportunities that we haven't faced before. Have we reflected on why somebody chose the age of 65 as sort of the magic age at which people would retire? I really have no idea, and I don't know that anyone else does. I think that in the 1960s, when social programs were introduced, it seemed like a good age. I'm told that at that time, the average length of payout of old age pension was seven years. Today it's 13 years.

We can't even agree on what retirement age is. In some places there are contracts that say a person must

retire at age 65. RRSPs, for example, can continue until you're 69. So is it 65 or 69? Judges and Senators retire at age 75.

Currently, about 14 percent of British Columbians are 65 or older. This is projected to grow to about 22½ percent by the year 2030. But that isn't the only demographic change that's occurring. There are fewer children; there are fewer young people. What is happening with our population pyramid is that it is evening out. I think that as time goes on, we're going to need the skills of our older workers.

Despite the fact that we're getting older as a province, in many jobs many healthy men and women are being forced into retirement long before they're ready. Unfortunately, British Columbia law allows employment contracts to contain a mandatory retirement age — in other words, an arbitrary age at which someone must retire, regardless of their particular circumstances. This means that people are being forced to retire at an age long before they are ready or it's necessary for them to do it.

In some instances it's come to my attention that we're losing citizens to other jurisdictions. For example, I'm told that we've lost a number of university professors as a result of mandatory retirement age. On one hand, we hear about skills shortages and we hear about brain drains, yet we are losing people simply because they are of a particular age.

[1025]

I'm told that UBC recently lost a pair of economics professors to England. These professors, who were award-winning in their work, said that the difference was simply to do with the mandatory retirement age. This movement of professors deprived our students of excellent learning opportunities. There have been similar experiences at Simon Fraser of professors who have reached mandatory retirement age and have had to move on to other jurisdictions.

Today only one in 12 people aged 65 and older is working. This is not a large group, but if people in this age group choose to work, they should share the same right to work that other adults in our society have.

I'd like to share with you, Mr. Speaker, just a couple of the stories that have come to me from constituents. One lady writes: "Age has nothing to do with creativity." I certainly agree with that. It has nothing to do with productivity. She points out that people, regardless of what job they've been in, can certainly move on and become mentors. They can be people who pass on their knowledge and skills. I've heard from many women, particularly women who've stayed home and raised families, who point out that they frequently enter a profession or the workforce late in life and therefore are deprived of a career that may be of the same length and have the same financial rewards as someone who didn't stay home to raise a family.

Many people would assume that mandatory retirement would be discrimination under the Human Rights Code. Unfortunately it's not. The Human Rights Code of B.C. states that "age" means an age of 19 years or more and less than 65 years." This means that com-

panies can enact a mandatory retirement policy in their contracts without fear of being sued by anyone who is negatively impacted. I think that is wrong.

Neither is mandatory retirement a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Supreme Court of Canada, in a 1990 case known as *McKinney v. the University of Guelph*, ruled that mandatory retirement is legal under our Charter. The court held that the violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms was justifiable because it created opportunities for younger workers.

I am going to await the remarks of the Minister of Labour, who is going to respond to this. It's certainly my hope that at some time in the near future, the minister will attempt to redress some of the items I have raised.

Hon. G. Bruce: The member for North Vancouver-Lonsdale brings to the floor an interesting topic, something that's becoming more interesting to me all the time. I don't know how the rest of you have found it, but the older I get, the younger the older people look, and 65 — albeit a few years off for me — is still coming along the line.

Of course, on a number of fronts, as the member has mentioned, we are healthier, we are more active, and we are more involved. Combined, then, with the demographic shift that's taking place in this province, where.... The member mentioned that we're not having the same growing natural population that we've experienced before. The need to find and to allow for people to take opportunities that are already existing and that will be growing in regards to the economy, regardless of age, is important for us to take a look at.

Then take into account the economy in this province and how we are seeing it turn and become stronger. We have seen a huge increase in the number of jobs in this province. Over two million people are working in British Columbia today, the largest number in the history of British Columbia. Some 200,000 jobs have been created in British Columbia during the course of the last three or four years. All of those are interesting statistics, but all certainly point to a stronger economy. The challenge for us is to make sure that we have qualified people who can undertake the work and do the jobs that need to be taken so that as things continue to improve, we've got people there available.

[1030]

It's funny that in our society this age of 65 has been one that was drawn. We then have a tendency to lose a huge resource to our society — a great wealth of experience and knowledge that simply is lost to us because of age. Mind you, those that are not covered under a major contract or not covered by government can work beyond the age of 65.

I take my father as an example. He worked up to the day he died, healthy and happy, and he had a great life. But it was the vitality, the excitement, the interaction that was ongoing and the daily business for him that kept him so healthy and alive. Albeit he was there

to make sure I wasn't making any mistakes, as you would know. But never minding that, he was also there in making sure the business was carrying on. The interaction with people is very, very important to us.

It's funny. There used to be a television program called *Mork and Mindy*, and it used to end with Mork going up to talk to Ork.

K. Krueger: Nanu Nanu.

Hon. G. Bruce: There you have it.

Mork would explain all the things that were done on Earth about whatever the subject was. I remember watching one relative to seniors. As he got up to talk to Ork at the end of this program, he was saying: "You know, down on Earth they have all this wonderful wealth of older folk, but when they hit this magic age of 65, they take them and retire them. They don't talk to them ever again, and all the young people make the same mistakes that the old people already made and already knew about. Why is it there on Earth that they don't go and talk to the older folk?"

I think there's a lesson to be learned from that. However, the member would also know, and I think it's important, that in the throne speech this is something that government is looking to address. In respect to that, there will be a Premier's council on aging and seniors issues, which will be established. It will include representatives from key seniors organizations in every region and our diverse multicultural communities. The council will identify pressing needs and opportunities to advance government's goals in respect to seniors activities. It will also consider the issue of mandatory retirement to engage seniors and all citizens in a fruitful dialogue on what changes, if any, should be made to improve seniors' independence and quality of living in the modern world.

Clearly, this is a topic that needs further investigation and review, and from the standpoint of making sure that we allow all citizens the opportunity to participate in society, perhaps we're at the point that the day of a mandatory age of retirement is past. What we hope through the throne speech and the establishment of this council is to allow a good public discussion and exchange so that it can guide government on the best steps going forward.

K. Whittred: Thank you to the minister for his remarks.

British Columbia would not be alone should it choose to end mandatory retirement. Seven other Canadian jurisdictions view mandatory retirement as discrimination at any age. We would join Alberta, Quebec, Manitoba, Prince Edward Island and the Territories in outlawing mandatory retirement.

I would like to take just a moment and expand a little bit on the minister's remarks around the new council on seniors and aging. This is certainly an initiative that I had worked very hard for in my capacity earlier in this mandate and one that I'm very anxious to see implemented. As we move and as these demo-

graphic changes that we've noted become even more obvious, the way in which we handle aging in our society, I think, is going to be extremely important in areas such as labour. In many jurisdictions we are going to have to look at not only how we encourage older workers but how we, in fact, use them.

[1035]

The minister and I shared part of a day at some events on Friday, and one of them was to hear some stories about workers on the waterfront. We were told about the difficulties in getting young people to go into the trades. These are trades that pay huge amounts of money. They're very lucrative; they're skilled. We are going to have to find ways not only to encourage our young people into those trades but to encourage the older workers that are now retiring to stay in those trades as skilled tradespeople who are going to teach the younger workers, who are going to offer their range of experiences and be part of the solution — rather than simply looking at them as at an age when they suddenly have to leave that particular area of the workforce.

Allowing people to work past 65 would only mean an end to age discrimination. No one should be forced to retire when they are willing and able to work. I look forward to the day when B.C. ends this form of discrimination.

I'd like the House just for a moment to imagine the last century without Winston Churchill, who became Prime Minister at the age of 69 and was into his seventies, of course, when he led the world through World War II. I would like to ask you to imagine this province without the energy of Jimmy Pattison, perhaps one of our best-known older workers. I would like my community of North Vancouver to imagine the community without Jack Loucks, our very revered former mayor who served until he was nearly 80. In this Legislature all of us are kept in check by the very good work of our own H.A.D. Oliver, who is certainly getting on in years and what we would call an older worker — still able to do his job and do it very well.

On that note I will conclude my remarks.

WILD IN KAMLOOPS

K. Krueger: Today I'd like to share with the House some information about the British Columbia Wildlife Park — which is situated on property owned by the city of Kamloops and is a wonderful venue, a wonderful facility run by a non-profit society — and the vision that the society has, which it refers to as "our new vision for the B.C. Wildlife Park."

Tourism B.C. recognizes that people from all over the world think of our province as Super, Natural British Columbia. Tourism is among the most valuable and fastest-growing sectors of B.C.'s economy with \$9 billion in revenues and over 22 million visitors in 2002, this government's first full year in office.

Communities in the Kamloops region have a strong desire to diversify their economies and participate in the valuable and fast-growing tourism industry. The

problem is that millions of tourists travel through these communities en route between the Rockies and the B.C. coast but do not stay long enough to discover much of the wonder of the B.C. interior.

Our government deserves credit, as it has already identified this problem and is addressing this. This past September the Premier announced that the Tourism B.C. marketing budget would be doubled from \$25 million to \$50 million, and he committed a further \$25 million through the Union of B.C. Municipalities for marketing. In December Tourism B.C. announced the tourism strategic framework that will double tourism revenue in the province from \$9 billion to \$19 billion by 2015.

As we approach the 2010 Winter Olympics, the eyes of the world will be focused on Super, Natural British Columbia. All this energy is being channelled into the attractions of this wonderful province. The Minister of Small Business and Economic Development should be congratulated for his ministry's development of the heartlands economic strategy to diversify the economy.

A major goal is to maximize tourism investment throughout the province, but how do we achieve this? We in Kamloops believe that one way is to invest in a provincial-scale gateway attraction, which will beckon tourists off the Trans-Canada Highway and stimulate their interest to explore the wonderful wilderness parks, wildlife and outdoor recreation opportunities of the B.C. interior.

We know that visiting a nature centre or zoological facility, viewing wildlife and birding are among the most popular outdoor activities in North America. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service in 2000 showed that 126 million Americans visit nature centres or zoological facilities each year and that wildlife viewing and birding are tremendously popular.

With the aging demographics of our society, wildlife viewing and birding are becoming increasingly popular. Canadians are very interested, also, in visiting nature centres and zoological facilities. Over ten million Canadians visit accredited zoos and aquariums in Canada each year. In British Columbia only two facilities are accredited. They are the Vancouver Aquarium and the B.C. Wildlife Park in Kamloops.

[1040]

The new vision of the B.C. Wildlife Park is to partner, to develop as a provincial-class gateway attraction that will energize tourism in the B.C. interior. The facility is ideally positioned along the Trans-Canada Highway. In fact, it is the only accredited zoological facility in all of Canada situated on the Trans-Canada Highway.

People love wildlife, and the B.C. Wildlife Park will provide the most interactive B.C. wildlife experience in the province. The most concise analogy I can give you is that the B.C. Wildlife Park will do for B.C. land-based tourism what the Vancouver Aquarium is doing for B.C. coastal tourism. The B.C. Wildlife Park complements the whole marketing strategy of Tourism B.C. As a provincial-scale attraction, the B.C. Wildlife Park

delivers a necessary component of the whole Super, Natural B.C. tourism package — that of interpreting the wonderful terrestrial wildlife of the province.

The B.C. Wildlife Park is already an award-winning facility. The park's education programs are attended by thousands of school kids and their teachers each year. The park has a burrowing owl captive breeding and release program that is recognized as the best in North America. This was an endangered species, and the park has been producing and successfully reintroducing burrowing owls to the natural habitat for years now. This spring the park will release 70 burrowing owl juveniles in partnership with area ranches and volunteers.

The society has many strategic partners, including the city of Kamloops and Thompson Rivers University. I want to compliment the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection for the recently signed memorandum of understanding between his ministry's environmental stewardship division and the B.C. Wildlife Park to interpret B.C. wildlife and promote sustainability throughout the province.

The Wildlife Park Society directors recently met with the mayor and administration of the city of Williams Lake with regard to a partnership to promote tourism in the B.C. interior. The mayor of Williams Lake agrees that what is needed is for the B.C. Wildlife Park to be developed as a gateway attraction, which will entice tourists off the highway and stimulate their interest through partnerships that will energize tourism throughout the B.C. interior.

In April 2003 the city of Kamloops made a lead contribution to the Wildlife Park Society of \$3 million as a challenge grant toward their \$10 million development goal. This past spring I had the pleasure of being at the B.C. Wildlife Park to announce a \$2 million infrastructure grant from the two senior governments toward the discovery centre. The society is halfway to raising the \$10 million required to develop the B.C. Wildlife Park as a destination attraction.

Construction of the new discovery centre will actually commence within the next few weeks. It will showcase innovative B.C. forest products and will be a leading facility in sustainable design and green technology. Recently the society received an award of \$80,000 from the U.S.-based Kresge Foundation for incorporating sustainable design into the building. The discovery centre will have a new admissions area, gift shop and concession. There will be an exciting theatre experience that will tell the story of this land we call British Columbia from the formation of the mountains 200 million years ago to the receding of the glaciers 12,000 years ago and up to the present.

The eco-inquiry area will be filled with family-oriented interactive displays that will allow people to explore the various habitats of B.C. and to learn about the amazing wildlife of the province. There will be an action desk with an interpreter holding what is referred to as an education animal. For example, there's a magnificent snowy owl at the B.C. Wildlife Park that was hatched from an egg there. There are injured owls

that have been rescued by people from the highways and brought to the park too badly injured to go back to the wild but serving as educational animals for the school children and others who come to the park.

The interpreter will be able to talk to visitors about wildlife viewing, birding and parks in Super, Natural B.C. Portable kiosks will highlight conservation initiatives that visitors can support for the benefit of B.C. Wildlife Park.

The Minister of Forests has been to the B.C. Wildlife Park recently and recognizes the valuable role that this not-for-profit society can play in promoting sustainable natural resource management in the province.

[1045]

Hon. M. de Jong: Thank you to my colleague for bringing some attention and profile to what is really an award-winning facility and one that is increasingly attracting attention from around the world.

He's right. It was December when the member and I had the opportunity to attend. I know he has been there many times, but this is a good chance for me to thank, in a very public way, Rob Purdy, the manager, and Darren Bennett, who I believe is their development planning officer.

It's a pretty extraordinary place. It's worth taking just a moment to consider in all their magnificence the humble beginnings, because I think we're just a couple of weeks away from the B.C. Wildlife Park and the society that operates it celebrating their fortieth anniversary. I think it was on a St. Patrick's Day in 1965 when the first meeting took place. About 40 people attended and paid \$15, as I recall from one of the directors, and this whole magnificent venture got started. Look at how far they've come, and look at the kinds of partnerships that have been part and parcel of that evolution and that creativity.

The land, the 128 acres the park exists on, is a combination of Crown land and a donation — some time ago, I believe, in the earlier days of the formation of the park — by Molson Brewery in excess of 100 acres. The society and the park are the products of a passionate interest on the part of the people involved and also a tremendous acumen for forging partnerships with the private sector and with government and for bringing all those things together.

The member, to his credit, has been a big part of one of the most recent examples of those partnerships, and that is the construction of the new discovery centre, which either has just begun or is a few weeks away from beginning. I think it is the latter. What an exciting day that will be, when the sod gets turned and the concrete starts getting poured.

This facility will have so many different facets to it. On the day we were there, I actually.... Mikala Jennings is one of the experts that works with some of the animals there. Qannitc, the snowy owl that the member referred to — to have the opportunity to handle the bird, to see up close the magnificence of that creature.... Students, the young and the young at heart — all of us, I think — are fascinated by getting that

kind of up-close opportunity to study some of these terrestrial creatures.

This is a facility that is going to provide that opportunity with respect to so many of the different species of wildlife that British Columbia is renowned for around the world. Importantly, in my view, it is going to have an opportunity to profile how other activities on the land base can take place in a way that is complementary to our desire to ensure the sustainability of the land base and the species. That's a key part of what the society is trying to do.

They went to great lengths to emphasize that they see another partnership opportunity out there for them. It's working with the forest sector. It's working with the forest sector to study some of the impacts of the pine beetle. It's working with the forest sector to continue to find ways to alleviate some of the challenges that exist with certain species of wildlife. We talked about the burrowing owl initiative. We have a spotted owl issue, a very serious issue, and there's an opportunity, we think — and more importantly, the society thinks — for undertaking some work that might alleviate some of the pressure that species is feeling.

This is a group of people — and I'm proud to be a member of a caucus with the member for Kamloops-North Thompson, who recognizes this as well — that is being proactive in identifying ways that we can all work together as volunteers, private sector and government to realize an objective we all have.

That is to ensure that this magnificent place we live in and call British Columbia preserves all of its magnificence, all of its species, and has an opportunity at the B.C. Wildlife Park for people from across North America and around the world to examine that magnificence up close and personal.

[1050]

K. Krueger: It was indeed several months ago that the minister visited the B.C. Wildlife Park with me. As always, I am impressed by his knowledge and retention of detail. It will be interesting to see if Hansard is able to spell Qannitc's name.

I encourage everyone present, all the members and in fact all the four million people of British Columbia to visit the B.C. Wildlife Park. It's truly a great experience. You'll get to handle owls. You'll get to see, especially in the spring, brand-new wildlife that's just come into the world. Every year there are birth announcements at the wildlife park and a whiteboard full of names of new animals that have been born there. There are also many injured animals that are brought there and either fully rehabilitated and reintroduced to the wild or kept there to live out their natural lives being lovingly cared for by the experts and the many volunteers there.

I thank the minister for his interest in the B.C. Wildlife Park and his enthusiasm for it. There are obvious opportunities for a partnership between the Ministry of Forests and other ministries and the B.C. Wildlife Park, with its interest in habitats. The park is going to include a nature exchange in its new vision, which will

encourage both kids and adults to learn about the natural world. Kids will be given points for what they know about nature and exchange those points for cool artifacts.

Currently, the Minister of Small Business and Economic Development is considering a phase 2 application for the B.C. Wildlife Park which, if approved, will take the wildlife park society more than two-thirds of the way to its goal. This will allow the establishment of a gateway attraction in Kamloops well in time for the 2010 Winter Olympics. It will include a new wildlife rehabilitation centre as part of the visiting experience, where visitors will be able to see the veterinary areas and food preparation facilities and talk to veterinarians, staff and volunteers about the animals under their care.

In partnership with the Animal Health Technology Centre at Thompson Rivers University, this new facility will be a centre of excellence in the province for wildlife rehabilitation. The phase 2 application includes enhanced wildlife park grounds and exhibits for the most exciting B.C. wildlife, including grizzly bear, black bear, cougar, timber wolf, moose and elk as well as new river otter and beaver exhibits. There will be falconry demonstrations, with birds of prey swooping over the heads of our visitors.

In summary, the B.C. Wildlife Park will provide the type of experiences that B.C. tourists are looking for when they visit Super, Natural British Columbia and will encourage them to travel around the province and view wildlife in their full beauty and glory in their natural habitats. The Vancouver Aquarium is interpreting marine wildlife for B.C.'s visitors, but no one is interpreting B.C.'s terrestrial wildlife. Kamloops is at the gateway of the B.C. interior. The B.C. Wildlife Park is the best-positioned facility in the province to be developed as a gateway attraction that will energize B.C. interior tourism by attracting tourists off the Trans-Canada Highway and stimulating their interest in the beautiful B.C. interior.

Deputy Speaker: For our final private member's statement today, the member for Delta South.

AN AGRICULTURAL PLAN FOR B.C.

V. Roddick: Our government has committed itself to looking and planning into the future, rather than ricocheting from election to election with no thought given to issues in the long term. We have put in place three-year rollout plans for each ministry. We have developed a provincial transportation plan as well as a mining plan.

It's now time for the province to look to its major natural resource: agriculture. The B.C. food system employs one in seven British Columbians. We are a sunrise industry. There has been steady, sustainable growth in actual farms, jobs and cash receipts over the past ten years.

Recently every aspect of our lives has changed dramatically — first, the personal computer; then the

fax, Internet and the BlackBerry. These wonderful inventions supposedly help us get on with our lives. The agricultural and scientific equivalent of these inventions — such as hybrid plant breeding; breeding of animal stock to grow faster, produce more milk and have leaner meat; DNA transgenics; genetically modified foods — are all to produce more and cheaper food so that we end up with a higher disposable income.

[1055]

Consequently, agribusiness has changed dramatically. There have been huge consolidations of companies resulting in the food supply chain being controlled worldwide by fewer and fewer corporations. Consolidation of processing plants across North America, putting every single product — meat, dairy or produce — into trucks, boiling up and down I-5 or across Canada and the U.S....

Our regional, provincial and national agricultural planning has had trouble keeping pace with the global outlook. We are responding after the fact. The average person is so far removed from the ranch and farm that he or she has absolutely no idea whatsoever what BSE — mad cow — or avian flu is actually costing this country — i.e., the taxpayers. It's not millions anymore; it's billions.

What needs to be done? This province can lead the way in agriculture in North America, as we have in finance and health care planning, and look down the road ten to 20 years. A reality check is required. Provincially, how do we manage urban-rural issues? In the Fraser Valley or the Okanagan, for example, the population explosion is pitting the country mice against the city mice and vice versa. In smaller sectors some municipalities are working together, but it's pretty much a piecemeal approach. The Fraser Valley, for instance, is becoming one entity.

How do we manage this human growth while still fostering and nurturing our wonderful local food supply? Farmers have modernized just as much as any other regular business. They depend on bigger trucks, better processing, dependable highway and byway infrastructure, and equipment that is as complicated as any flight deck, as well as trying to control the weather by the use of modern greenhouses.

Why do we have urban-rural conflict? Agriculture should be part and parcel of our overall mosaic. We still have to eat to live.

Today our provincial agricultural land reserve basically looks at the individual number of acres available. That concept must be revamped to include the dollar value of production per acre in its formula. We as citizens of British Columbia wholeheartedly support the agricultural land reserve. However, there is a large disconnect as to how we maintain and sustain the ALR. Because the ALR depends completely on the existence of the modern-day farmer and all that that entails, it needs to be in the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. Only then can the people of the province deal with this natural resource that is 100 percent sustainable.

Water is also a major necessity for us all, yet we are finding our rural-urban competition building up

throughout North America. Yes, we like our lawns and daily showers, but water is required in food production from the field to the table. How do we balance this?

We are planning and managing the business of our forests, looking into the future. It's time we went out to the people in this province to discuss how agriculture, food and land management work in their daily lives. It's time the overall business sector participated — the Vancouver Board of Trade, B.C. Chamber of Commerce, Mining Association of B.C., Investment Dealers Association of Canada, to name a few. It's time they applied their expertise to work with the farmers, processors, wholesalers, retailers and grocers to help map out a strategic plan for the future of our food supply and the future of our cities and communities.

The Select Standing Committee on Health just produced *The Path to Health and Wellness: Making British Columbians Healthier by 2010*. Among the many ideas the report discussed were the implementation of a junk food tax, tax credit for physical activities and changes to allowable deductions for childhood activities.

[H. Long in the chair.]

We have involved the Ministries of Health and of Education, but again, that's a piecemeal approach. A well-conceived management plan that encompasses all levels of our lifestyle provincewide is the next essential step to continue developing British Columbia to be the best that it can be — air quality, food safety, water supply and water safety, environmental concerns and land management.

[1100]

We all willingly donate to ecological, wildlife and fish enhancement programs. We have to start tying our food supply into that same mind-set. We need to work in collaboration with our teachers, lecturers and professors. Food, be it for wildlife or humans, is the basic foundation of a sustainable environment. We must bring agronomy back to the forefront of our society. For far too long we have allowed quality, taste and nutritional content to be sacrificed in favour of shelf life and price. Yes, we are living longer, but we want to enjoy that longevity. We want to be healthy, and our safe, nutritious, local and sustainable food supply is where we must start.

I look forward to the minister's comments.

Hon. J. van Dongen: I'm very pleased to respond to the member for Delta South, and I appreciate her keen interest in the agrifood industry. Very often in this House we are dealing with issues that are challenges in the industry — one-off challenges such as the avian influenza and the detection of BSE in the Canadian cattle herd. These were certainly very unforeseen but do take a tremendous amount of focus away from long-term strategic planning for the industry. The member for Delta South is saying that it is time to think about the industry as a whole and look at government's role in planning with the industry for the future.

Since I became Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, I have been working closely with my federal, provincial and territorial counterparts to develop and implement a national program — a national framework — for agriculture known as the agricultural policy framework, a five-year agreement that includes an active partnership by both the provinces and the federal government.

The objective of this framework is to position producers to strengthen their businesses and meet the demands of consumers at home and abroad. The key pillars: to work with industry to provide them affordable and effective business risk management tools, environmental management programs, and food safety and quality programs. The five-year agreement also provides tools for fostering innovation in the sector to keep our industry competitive in both local and global markets, to foster renewal if farm families wish to change direction, and for international trade.

We are two years into the implementation of this five-year agreement, and reviews to measure progress are now underway. We also use our ministry service plan as a good blueprint for the future. As the member said, we have three-year rolling budgets and service plans to guide us.

In parallel with developing this plan, the ministry has been reorganized and structured around four key business areas for agriculture that support our involvement in the national program as well. The service plan four key business areas are business risk management, industry competitiveness, food safety and quality, and environmental sustainability and resource development.

All of this is under a vision of a competitive and profitable agrifood industry that is environmentally and socially sustainable and that provides safe, high-quality food for consumers and export markets. By focusing on these five key business areas — four in agriculture and one in fisheries — we have made progress in positioning our industry towards both economic and environmental sustainability. We have adapted wherever possible, such as developing the environmental farm plans, an approach that government and industry have partnered on.

[1105]

We are also working on a number of new initiatives under this existing planning framework. We have begun a dialogue on the future, looking through a value-chain lens. My deputy minister was instrumental in establishing an agrifood outlook forum that brought together a number of different perspectives last June in the agrifood industry.

We are working with the Minister of Health Services and the Minister of Education to ensure that our ministry is a partner in developing a strategy for this province around healthy food and healthy eating. We will be part of the Act Now B.C. initiative. We know that as a disease-prevention measure, healthy food and eating can be an important role.

Another key strategy will be to work with our government partners and industry to maximize the bene-

fits to B.C.'s agrifood industry from the Olympic Games in 2010. We are well on our way to achieving a national standard and a new provincial standard for the production of VQA wine for this province. Agri-food opportunities continue to be important to us as well and, again, will provide many opportunities for B.C. agriculture as we roll up the next five years towards the Olympics of 2010.

I've also asked my staff to work with partner ministries to evaluate the opportunities that can emerge from the province's life sciences and alternative energy strategies. I look forward to working with all of my colleagues, but in particular the member for Delta South, in long-term planning and continued work on a comprehensive plan for B.C. agriculture.

V. Roddick: I would like to thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries for his rock-solid support over the past four years. He and his ministry have been available at all times, even during times of extreme pressure, to assist both myself and the constituents of Delta South. I suggest that Delta South is an excellent benchmark for the beginning of a new era of land, food and community, helping to make land, food and community healthy and sustainable. We still have to eat to live. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Deputy Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Motions on Notice

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR OLYMPIC ATHLETES

B. Bennett: My motion, Motion 2, reads as follows: [Be it resolved that this House recognize the significant financial challenges Olympic hopefuls must overcome to be competitive on the world stage and encourage governments of all levels and communities to review assistance provided to Olympic athletes.]

I totalled it up last week when I was preparing my remarks. This is the seventh time that I've spoken in this House about the 2010 games. I was an amateur athlete in my younger days. I played several sports for many years — captained the football team, the basketball team and the hockey team in school. I played university football, rugby and hockey. Although I wasn't good enough to be an elite athlete, I learned how to work hard to achieve goals, and I learned the value of dreams and of visualization. I've applied those lessons in my life in the business world, at law school and now in political life.

A little bit about the Kootenays. Despite our small population, the Kootenays have generated an incredible number of world-class winter athletes, including several Olympic gold medal winners. The Kootenays have also hosted many national and international winter events in communities like Invermere, Kimberley, Fernie and Rossland. For decades the men and women from the mines, the smelters, the sawmills and the ranches have been coaching their children and building

ski hills and ice arenas. As a result of their efforts, an incredible array of winter world-class athletes and teams has been generated.

The Kimberley Dynamiters won a world hockey championship, which was an improbable achievement for a community with a population of less than 10,000. The famed Trail SmokeEaters, who drew players from a population base of less than 15,000, amazingly won two world hockey championships.

It is not a coincidence that Canada's top female athlete of the last century was born and raised in the Kootenays. Rossland's Nancy Greene Raine took the world of skiing by storm, and her achievements are legendary.

[1110]

The Kootenays have produced more Canadian ski team members than any other similar-sized region in Canada. With a population of only 3,500, more than 15 of Rossland's Red Mountain Racers have skied for our country. This is an achievement of mythical proportions, and it's a story that should be told to the world.

Kimberley's Gerry Sorensen is Canada's only female skier to win the world downhill ski championship. Rossland's Kerrin Lee-Gartner is the only Canadian athlete who has won an Olympic gold medal in downhill. It's not a coincidence that the first human being to climb the highest peak on each of the seven continents was also from the Kootenays. Kimberley's Pat Morrow has this special distinction.

Per capita, the Kootenays have produced an unbelievable number of National Hockey League players. Today, if there was a season, there would be 13 players from the Kootenays playing in the NHL. Imagine any other region with a population of 180,000 having 13 of their own playing at the highest level in their sport. It almost seems inconceivable for any other region of 180,000 to produce 13 current players in, let's say, for example, the National Football League or the National Basketball Association or major league baseball. The Kootenay story is the stuff of dreams.

Cranbrook, with a population of 20,000, is a hotbed of hockey excellence. There are six current National Hockey League players — again, if there was a season this year — who are graduates of the Cranbrook Minor Hockey Association. During the past seven years, on four separate occasions the Stanley Cup was brought to Cranbrook. Like Rossland's ski story, Cranbrook's hockey story is a mythical one.

Three members of the men's 2002 Olympic gold medal-winning hockey team have their roots in the Kootenays: Cranbrook's Scott Niedermayer; Steve Yzerman, who started his minor hockey career in Cranbrook; and Steve Tambellini, who was born and raised in Trail, and who was recently appointed as the head of Canada's Olympic men's hockey team program.

Let's take a look at Canada's Winter Olympic performance. In 1988 in Calgary we won five medals. In Lillehammer in '94 we won 13. In Nagano in '98 we won 15, and in Salt Lake City in 2002 we won 17, so we're not doing badly in the Winter Games. But we should be doing better.

The fact of the matter is that athletes with the best resources win medals. One newspaper commentary I read last week said that Canada has been a country with an eighth-place budget and an expectation of medal-winning performances. I think that's a bit harsh. However, Catriona Le May Doan was not just born to be a speed skater; she was provided with the resources to make her into a two-time Olympic champion. Pierre Leuders didn't magically become a bobsledder. He had the best training facility, which was a legacy from the 1988 Calgary Games, and good equipment helping him out.

I read last week the story of a female Canadian luge athlete who was in Turin, Italy, preparing for the Turin Olympics. She was talking about having to memorize the luge course there. She had the resources provided to her that she could use to spend in Turin to make some runs down this Olympic course and prepare for the Olympics. Without being given the resources to do that, she would be going into a course that she would know nothing about and would be at a decided disadvantage to those athletes from around the world who would have had the opportunity to study the course.

The U.S.A. was a prime example at Salt Lake City of how resources, applied intelligently, can make a huge difference to a national team's performance. The U.S. had never won more than 13 medals at the Winter Olympic Games, but at Salt Lake the Americans went from 13 to 34. They finished second behind Germany's 35.

Right now Canada provides allowances for top-level amateur athletes through what's known as the athlete assistance program. Athletes fall into two tiers which influence their level of funding. The tiers are elite and development. These levels of funding were increased by \$400 as of September 1, 2004. That's a good thing.

The senior tier receives \$1,500 per month for a total of \$18,000 annually, and in addition to this, these athletes can also receive up to \$10,000 for tuition and up to \$5,000 for special needs assistance. The special needs assistance might be such things as the cost of relocation and child care expenses. There are approximately 800 athletes in the senior tier. The development tier receives \$900 per month for a total of \$10,800 a year. These athletes have the same access to the additional funds. There are 500 athletes who fall into that category. This is an improvement in terms of the funding provided to these athletes, but when you think about just what these young athletes must eat, it's not a lot of money.

[1115]

Canada, of course, has some unique challenges in terms of training athletes and developing athletes. Our funding is spread over a wider range of both winter and summer sports compared to some of our competitors. Australia and Great Britain, for example, spend most of their resources on the Summer Olympic sports and Norway on the Winter Olympic sports. Canada tends to divide the resources for both sets of Olympic Games.

We also have a huge land mass and a relatively small population, which is spread out along the U.S. border. This increases the cost of training athletes and makes it difficult to find athletes to participate in international games because of a lack of a critical mass. On the other hand, our standard of living here in Canada is one of the highest in the world, so it should give us the resources we need to fund sports.

Canada's support for athletes increased in the 1990s. Since then, athlete performance has increased, as almost three-quarters of funded athletes in individual sports have improved their finishes at world championships or Olympic Games.

In terms of the Winter Olympic Games, Canada's performance has been fairly strong. In Salt Lake City we were fourth overall in both the gold-medal count and the total medal count. Norway was the only nation smaller than Canada to perform better. But in terms of the number of athletes we actually send to the games and how many medals these athletes win, as a country we could do better with more resources. The International Olympic Committee, at the conclusion of the Summer Games in Athens, specifically singled out the Canadian federal and provincial governments for a lack of funding for sport development.

The Canadian Olympic Committee — in partnership with the Vancouver organizing committee for the 2010 games, Sport Canada and some other organizations — announced a \$110 million program to help double the country's medal count at the 2010 games. Canadian sporting officials say they plan to invest \$110 million in training, with half coming from government and the rest from the private sector. If a country like Norway, with four million inhabitants, in a city like Lillehammer, with 12,000 inhabitants, can lead the medal tally with 28 medals at the Olympic Games ten years ago, Canada can do it in five years' time.

Host nations are expected to do better than Canada has managed in our first two attempts at putting on Olympic Games. Canadian athletes didn't win gold in either Montreal or the 1988 Winter Games in Calgary. To ensure that we do win gold medals in 2010, the Canadian Olympic Committee has drafted a plan, which they're calling *Own the Podium 2010*. They're targeting 35 medals for 2010. That would be double what we won in Salt Lake City in 2002.

This *Own the Podium* program is a sport technical program designed to help Canada become the number one nation in terms of medals won at our 2010 Olympic Winter Games in Vancouver-Whistler. It's also a collaborative effort supported by all 13 of Canada's winter national sports federations and the major winter sports partners. The focus of this program is to provide additional resources and high-performance programming to Canadian athletes, coaches and support personnel to help them achieve podium success in 2010.

The *Own the Podium* report says there are two ways that we can increase the medal count. The first is to increase the number of potential medallists. We have to go from 160 athletes who were potential medallists in the 2002 games up to 211, an increase of 51. The second

thing we have to do is to increase the success rate of those athletes who are potential medallists. We have to make sure that we convert more of those into medal winners. We were at a 27 percent success rate in Salt Lake City, and we need to go to something close to 50 percent.

Most sports require eight to 12 years to develop a medal-potential athlete. We only have five years to the 2010 games, so we have to choose sports where it is still possible to recruit new athletes that have a chance of winning a medal. Some of those sports would be long- and short-track speed skating, freestyle skiing, snowboard, bobsled and skeleton. There is only this one remaining season to initiate that recruitment.

In terms of increasing the success rate, the people who put the *Own the Podium* report together believe that it's possible to approach the 50 percent success rate. The average success rate at the 2002 games was 33 percent. There were 22 nations that competed in Salt Lake City, and their average success rate was 33 percent. Canada was at 27 percent. The host country, the U.S.A., had a success rate of 63 percent, while Germany boasted a 92 percent success rate. The enhanced success rate can be accomplished by funding targeted national sports organizations at a world-class level so that they can service their athletes as needed. Canada has terrific potential to improve both the number of potential medalists and the success rate.

[1120]

I want to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by just telling a short story about a young 24-year-old constituent of mine. As I indicated at the beginning of my speech, there are a great many winter athletes that come out of the Kootenays. Emily Bryden from Fernie is a classic example. Her story, and her family's story, is interesting and inspiring.

Emily is an only child. Her mother, Rosemary, told me recently that they could never have provided the support to Emily had there been more children. As it was, the Bryden family made many choices for two decades as Emily grew and improved as a skier. They started building their house when Mrs. Bryden was pregnant with Emily 25 years ago. Mrs. Bryden told me the other day that she put the concrete floor in the basement of that house just a couple of years ago. Mr. Bryden, who was a terrific skier himself, passed away six years ago.

Rosemary Bryden does not view the choices that they made to help Emily develop as a skier as sacrifices. I used that word when I was talking to her, and she corrected me. She said: "No, they weren't sacrifices." Rather, she feels fortunate that she and her husband were blessed with a child with such will and determination, and they threw themselves into doing everything they could to support Emily over those two decades.

During Emily's early years, when she started to ski at the age of two and a half, Mr. and Mrs. Bryden picked rocks at the Fernie ski hill to help pay for their family ski pass. Emily just placed eleventh in the world at Santa Caterina, Italy, last week. She has been clocked

at 140 kilometres an hour in the downhill, if you can imagine that — 140 kilometres an hour. She suffered two very serious knee injuries a couple of years ago, but she is back competing at full strength today.

For those two decades of struggle, Emily and her family received no assistance from any level of government until Emily actually made the Canadian senior alpine team. At more than one competition as a junior, Emily would be asked by her competitors from across this country and across the world: "Where are your race skis, Emily?" Emily for many, many years had one pair of skis and one pair of boots.

She made the B.C. team but had to stay home from the Canadian championship because the family could not afford to send her across the country to Newfoundland for the meet. Can you imagine training, working and dedicating yourself from the age of two and a half and then, against all odds, getting to the national level only to be told by your equally disappointed parents that there just isn't enough money to attend your first national meet? Travel costs were the family's responsibility, as were coaching costs and all equipment — no government encouragement or support.

When you think about the support that elite European winter athletes receive from their governments, it is truly remarkable that Canadian kids get to the world championship and Olympic podiums as much as they do. It is a testament to their discipline and their determination. It also points out, though, that Canada must start providing more support to athletes at a younger age.

Emily Bryden is exceptional. Relying mostly on her family's support and some help from a local ski shop in Fernie, Emily became world junior downhill champion. But for every Emily Bryden and her amazing family, there must be many who just can't afford the cost and who are forced to abandon their dreams of competing at the highest levels for Canada.

Canada is making some very good decisions these days, and B.C. is right in there helping with more money. Much of my comment today has been focused on the elite athlete and increasing Canada's medal count at the 2010 games, but the story of Emily Bryden and her family should illustrate to us that support is also needed earlier in the athlete's life, before they become an elite athlete, during the years of development and hard work.

My request is that British Columbia continue to support the direction of the Canadian Olympic Committee and the goals of the *Own the Podium* program but that B.C. and Canada also begin to invest more at the grass-roots level. There is no better way to encourage the development of role models, heroes and leaders in our society than to support the youth of this country who have big dreams and who are willing to work incredibly hard to achieve their dreams.

It has been a real honour to talk about these inspiring young people who give so much of themselves and who bring great honour to our nation.

B. Penner: It is a pleasure for me to rise and support the motion put forward by my colleague the

member for East Kootenay, and I want to thank him for doing so. Just to reiterate, this motion states as follows: "Be it resolved that this House recognize the significant financial challenges Olympic hopefuls must overcome to be competitive on the world stage and encourage governments of all levels and communities to review assistance provided to Olympic athletes."

[1125]

As you will remember, just last week Budget 2005 included a number of provisions dealing with the upcoming Olympics here in British Columbia in 2010. Specifically now, as a result of Budget 2005, we will have funded \$328 million towards the province's total commitment of \$600 million. So we're more than half-way there in terms of providing the necessary funding. This provides for a number of things: funding to start construction on venues and endowment to support the ongoing operation costs of certain venues, medical and security costs, and legacies for sports, first nations and municipalities.

I was taking a little look at the budget for the Ministry of Small Business and Economic Development, and there's a provision for \$40 million towards arts and sports programs in British Columbia. I'm hoping within that envelope of \$40 million there will be some funding available to support the initiatives laid out in this motion put forward by the member for East Kootenay. As the member pointed out, many of the young athletes that Canada's looking to.... Our hopes in the Olympic Games, whether it's 2010 or Summer Games, really rest on the shoulders of those young athletes. Many of those young athletes have a very difficult time, indeed, making ends meet.

Chilliwack is fortunate in that we are the host community, it seems, for most of the Olympic kayakers in Canada. I've had a chance to meet with a number of those individuals over the years. I know that, at least in times past, a number of them would get together and rent a cottage up at Cultus Lake so they could perform some of their training there on the lake, some of their fitness routine. It's in close proximity to the Chilliwack River, which is where Canada's Olympic kayaking team does a lot of their practising.

Chilliwack has had quite a long history and experience dealing with these young and very committed Olympic hopefuls, and we have some success stories. David Ford, who I think is fairly well known in Canada as an Olympic kayaker, lives in the constituency of Chilliwack-Kent, as do a number of other Olympic hopefuls. You can see them on certain weekend or week days on the Chilliwack River, combating those white rapids near Slesse Creek or Tamahi Creek. They do a remarkable job. It's really something worth seeing if you ever have the opportunity to be in that part of the world.

Just a few days ago, on February 12, I had the opportunity to be at city hall in Chilliwack for the flag-raising ceremony for the Spirit of B.C. community flag. Chilliwack has struck a committee to help organize and prepare our community for the Olympic Games and all the benefits that will be flowing to British Columbia.

We want to position ourselves to be able to take advantage of those many opportunities that will be coming our way. Committee co-chairman Terry Bodman, who has a long history of community involvement in Chilliwack — somebody I know quite well, as he was my campaign manager for the last two elections — has been instrumental in pulling together this committee.

I was pleased to see that on that day, on February 12 in Chilliwack, we had a number of former Olympic gold-medal winners present in Chilliwack, specifically Margaret Langford, whitewater kayaking athlete; Amelia Koloska, who was an Olympic athlete in the 1970s; and Bob Penner, a name I enjoy seeing in the newspaper from time to time. He lives in Agassiz and was showing off his Olympic medal to some of the younger kids that were there, not this Saturday but the Saturday before last. He still lives in our community and serves as an excellent role model for some of the younger kids who aspire to compete in the Olympic Games. All of these people had significant financial challenges to overcome in order for them to become successful.

I know there are a range of different things that could be done. I hope that communities across the province will keep in mind the tremendous dedication and commitment on the part of our young athletes and will look for ways to support them in the years ahead so that we can be proud when the next Olympic Games occur and we can expect to see a significant number of medals coming home to Canada.

D. MacKay: I am also pleased to stand up and support the motion put forward by the member for East Kootenay. I'm going to give a slightly different perspective. I heard the member for East Kootenay and the previous speaker talk about medal winners from their part of the province.

[1130]

Given the fact that I happen to live in the north, we are sometimes restricted in our ability to train athletes in some of the endeavours in which they would like to undertake because of the lack of some of our facilities. Of course I'm talking about the lack of speed-skating ovals, the lack of a luge, the lack of a bobsled run. These are just a couple of things. We do have skating rinks. Some of them are outdoors, and we usually have to shovel the ice off to get our kids on playing hockey. But what we do in the north to make up for some of our shortcomings and our lack of training facilities is take advantage of what's available to us.

One that comes to mind right now, even though it's not an Olympic venue, is dogsled races in the small community of Telkwa. We have annual dog races. I have to tell you that standing there and watching the excitement in those dogs.... If we could just transfer that to the athletes that take part in the more commonly known venues, it would be quite a feat. The dogs are running before they hit the ground, and they don't stop running until they come across the finish line. It's kind of intriguing to stand there and watch these dogs as they run across the horizon, and you can see the guy standing on the back of the dogsled. Most

of these dogs are pretty small dogs. It's quite surprising. I assumed that sled dogs would be quite large. They're actually quite small, but they've got lots of stamina.

Speaking about dogsleds, I spoke previously about the small community of Atlin, the small northern community that has about 400 people. I guess if they want to skate up there, they probably have to shovel off Atlin Lake or a portion of it so they can put their skates on. I know they have races on the lake with cars, but they have very limited venues up there in which they can partake in events that would eventually lead some of their young people to the Olympic venue.

There is one chap who lives in Atlin. His name is Hans Gatt. We have a race in the northern part of our part of the province called the Yukon Quest. It's a 250-mile dogsled race. Mr. Gatt lives in Atlin, and he races in this particular race — 250 miles. He has won it three consecutive years in a row. That is a wonderful compliment to the man and his dogs to have been able to win that event three consecutive years in a row.

The purpose of mentioning that is that in the northern part of the province, although we don't have the numbers they have in the lower mainland and other areas of our province, we do have some rather unique athletes, and we take advantage of the abilities and the venues available to us to shine in the many events that are there. I heard the member for East Kootenay talk about Nancy Greene Raine, who set the world on fire when she became the first female athlete to win a gold medal for Canada. I believe it was in alpine skiing.

We just have to wonder how we get our athletes up to the level where they can compete in the Olympics. I suppose it starts — and I'm going to speak from personal experience — at a very early age. I'm going to talk about alpine skiing, because in alpine skiing young people start off at probably six and seven years of age or younger. They start off in a program called the Nancy Greene Ski League, where the kids ski together as a team. When they race, they take the combined time of all the racers on a particular team to determine which team won the race. I can attest to that, because I live in Smithers and I watched my own son go through the Nancy Greene Ski League. I watched him go into the alpine ski program.

This is where it got a little bit expensive. Living in the north, we normally have to travel down south to Whistler or to one of the bigger ski resorts in the Kootenays or the Okanagan to get points. That's how the point system works. The point system works to identify those young athletes, those young alpine skiers, that are good at what they do. In order to get the points, they have to compete. Of course, to travel down here costs money. It costs money to the parents, and it costs time away from home and other family members to do that.

My son went through that program. He actually won the provincial giant slalom race at Smithers one year. He also went on to finish third in the combined downhill, slalom and giant slalom races at Banff a few years ago. He finished third in western Canada, and

another young athlete from Smithers finished first. But there was a cost associated to that. The cost to get those young athletes back to those communities and to be able to partake in the events costs mom and dad money.

[1135]

I understand the need to be able to afford to send our young people off without financially putting a big burden on the families. I think the member for East Kootenay spoke very well about that young athlete that did make the provincial team and had problems competing nationally because of a lack of funds.

How do we get these young people up to that level? It is a challenge; there's no doubt about that. But I think it is a challenge that we in government and we as individuals collectively have to be able to address to offset some of the travel costs.

We can do fundraising. That's always done in alpine ski programs. I can tell you that having watched and gone through the financial burden of helping my family through the racing program, I'm now doing it with my grandchildren. I'm proud and pleased to be able to do that, because I know the benefits of the Nancy Greene Ski League.

That program takes place every Saturday morning for three hours. I take my grandchildren up there, or my daughter does, and we watch those kids enjoy the camaraderie of learning how to ski and of being a team player. That's what the Olympic motto is all about. It is taking part, with the best the world has to offer, to compete and see who is the best in each of the venues they take part in.

I'm certainly very pleased to be here today speaking in support of the motion that was put forward by the member for East Kootenay. I'm hoping that as time progresses, we will find time in the next four or five years to help provide some funding to make sure that the best we have in this province, that the best we have in Canada, actually make it to the Olympics in 2010 and that they come off the ski race or whatever event they're in and go to the podium in the number one position.

I support the motion, and I now look forward to other members speaking.

V. Anderson: It's a pleasure to stand and support the member for East Kootenay in his emphasis that we should support our young people who are preparing themselves for the Olympics, summer and winter, and our Paralympics as well. I have had the experience myself in earlier years, in high school and university, of participating in track and being a sprinter and knowing, in that simple undertaking, that this does not require the special techniques, the special buildings, the special equipment and other things that other sports require and knowing the difficulty there is in trying to develop and maintain your particular strengths.

Most people don't realize the hours that these persons have to put in for training — the hours, the days, the weeks, the months, the years. During that period of time, they put aside many other opportunities in their

lives. As has been indicated today, their whole families put aside many of the other activities of their lives to concentrate on this particular skill.

We as a community are proud of these persons who go forth, and we are particularly proud when they win the medals we hope they will achieve. But it seems to me that with our pride comes some obligation, some responsibility to help them get through to this opportunity. Any business that has somebody in that business who trains and upgrades themselves on a regular basis will put money aside for that training, for that opportunity, for that improvement. They will give them time and support.

[1140]

It seems to me that we as a community need to do the same. I was impressed just recently to have the opportunity to view a video of the synchronized swim team from the University of Victoria — a group of young women, some of them in the first year of university, who had had the opportunity in their high school years to be involved in synchronized swimming. When they went to Victoria to university, they wished to do the same. Without a coach, without financial support from anyone, these young athletes prepared themselves in order to not only participate locally but to participate in the national event recently in eastern Canada. They were received there with welcome arms because there had not been a western representative to this meet for many years. They had no coach. They made their own arrangements. They made their own travel plans. They and their families raised the funds that they needed, and they went there on their own. As I watched that video, I was so impressed.

I have difficulty standing on my head at any time, but to see them standing on their heads underwater and to see the synchronization — which they could not see while they were doing it — of their feet and their arms was fascinating. To recognize that they were doing this without a coach and that they came in third in that event of representatives from across Canada.... This is the kind of example of young men and women in our community who are devoting themselves not only to individual accomplishment but to team accomplishment as well, something that will stand them well in their whole life experience.

I think it's very significant that we should take the opportunity not only to glory in the Olympics in our community, not only to glory in the benefit it will bring to us in an economic sense and in a tourist sense, but to recognize that it is possible because our young men and women are devoting themselves totally and fully — 60 hours a week, many of them; full-time — putting aside everything else in order that they might have that special skill and be able to share it on behalf of our country and of our citizens.

I thank the member for East Kootenay for bringing this forward, because I think it is a reminder of the responsibility that we have in supporting our young people as they go forth to develop their own skills that they will take into their life, but particularly as they make us proud in Canada of the opportunities that

they share with teams around the world. Win or lose, we congratulate them in being part of this undertaking, and I trust that we will give them the appropriate support.

D. Hayer: The importance of this motion is that it understands the challenges faced by our athletes in trying to be the best they can be.

In 2010, I want to see Canada win the most medals of all nations competing in the Winter Olympics, and I want to see British Columbia athletes leading the national contingent in that medal count. But for our athletes to win medals, they need to be the best in the world in their sport. That means training, training, training, and the best coaches available.

The biggest hurdle for our athletes is not the competition they will face so much as the cost of preparation. Coaching, travel and competitions all cost money — a lot of money — over many years at the elite level that our athletes must compete at to be medal contenders.

That is why I'm speaking to this motion: to encourage all levels of government to look at the financial and facilities assistance provided to Olympic-calibre athletes. I encourage everyone who has hopes of seeing our young people climbing the podium at the world's prestigious sporting events to carefully review the assistance they provide and ensure that it is affordable to all young people who have hopes and dreams of representing their country and their province in the Olympic Games.

On that basis, I fully endorse this motion and ask all other members of this House to join me in supporting it.

Now I move adjournment of debate on Motion 2.

D. Hayer moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

M. Hunter: I rise to move Motion 3 standing in my name. The motion reads:

[Be it resolved that this House recognizes British Columbia's leadership in developing innovative solutions that have placed our health care system on a solid foundation for the 21st century.]

[1145]

I think we in this House all know that there is little that's more important to British Columbians than our health care system, and we need to know that the system works for us when we need it. Despite the sensational media stories often fuelled by members of the opposition, I have to say that the system is working. Can it be better? Of course, but you know when you ask people who have required medical care whether or not the system works for them, the kinds of responses you get are: "Yeah, the system really treated me in a first-class way. People who provide medical care in our

facilities go out of their way. They went out of their way to make me comfortable."

I think it's instructive to just look at the number of services that we as British Columbians receive each and every year. Every year British Columbia delivers more than 19 million GP visits. That's five every year by every British Columbian. Every British Columbia citizen goes to see their doctor five times on average. Every year there are more than four million visits to specialists. That's 4.5 million — one per British Columbian. More than 31 million diagnostic procedures are conducted every year. That's seven for every British Columbian. Four million surgeries are conducted every year. That's one for each and every British Columbia citizen.

Is the system under duress? I think it's fair to say that it is. I also think that managing the challenges of a public health care system in this country is the challenge that will be facing whoever sits in these chairs for the next 20, even 50, years. We have an aging population. We all know that, and we all need to talk more about it because it's a real problem, not just a theoretical one.

We have a growing population thanks to the policies of this government that are attracting people from across Canada and around the world to come and live in our special corner of the globe. We have new technology. We have things that we had not even heard about five, six short years ago — PET scans, for example. We have increasingly expensive pharmaceuticals. We have new diseases. You know, nobody had heard about SARS — what? — three years ago. We have threats of pandemics being talked about daily in the press. These are challenges that our health care system has to meet, and they are challenges that under this government I believe they are meeting.

Under the last government there was no plan. Last week in this House the Solicitor General showed what the plan for policing and public safety in this province was under the last government. I found the same plan. He must have dropped it on his way out of the House because, like the NDP plan for policing, their plan for health care is a blank page of paper. It's blank on both sides. That's the fact. That's what we're faced with.

So how are we meeting the challenges and providing innovations and solutions for the twenty-first century? I want to first go back to 2001, because that's what the opposition wants to do. That's what Carole James wants to do to this province: take us back to 2001. Let's ask the question: what did health care look like just four years ago? Well, there was no plan. The blank-page planning for health care was what the NDP had. There was no plan for facilities. There was no plan to replace or refresh or add to facilities, which frankly, in some cases, are approaching the end of their working lives. It's not my area, but I think the Fraser Valley is a good example of that. Even on mid-Vancouver Island we had a medical physical facility issue that was 25 years behind times in serving the population of the region.

There was a mental health plan. I guess the mental health plan was there, but you know it was a blank

page because there was never any money. It was announced and re-announced but never with any money.

Under the NDP in 2001 we had 52 disparate management regimes looking after health care in this province. We changed that. We put 52 into six. We now have five geographic regions and a provincial health services authority that is looking after the management of our health care structure in a way that is providing huge savings to the taxpayers of British Columbia.

[1150]

In my own community in 2001 we were in year 14 — 14 years of promises that the Nanaimo Regional General Hospital would get new surgical suites, new state-of-the-art operating theatres. For 14 years that had been planned, including ten years under the last NDP government. If we go back to 2001, you can forget the \$30 million-plus investment in the bricks and mortar that we see there today for the shortly-to-be-opened, state-of-the-art operating theatres that are going to serve not only the people of the mid-Island but also attract new physicians to our region. That was not in the cards four years ago.

In 2001 we had a shortage of physicians. Frankly, there is still a shortage of physicians in my community, because there was no plan to train more doctors in this province. The NDP didn't have a plan to expand the number of physicians that we're training. This government has put in place plans that will allow us to build the population of doctors that we need, including the opening of a new medical school at the University of Victoria.

There was a nurse shortage as well. There was no plan from the NDP in 2001 to add to the number of nurses that wanted to be trained — no new nurse training spaces, no plan to bring back people who wanted to re-enter the medical nursing workforce after perhaps raising a family. There was no plan for that, in spite of the fact that we know when we train nurses in British Columbia, most of them stay in the regions in which they take their training. In my own region 53 percent of nurses who graduate from Malaspina University College actually stay to work on Vancouver Island.

There were no plans for nurse practitioners. We are just about to see the first graduates of the nurse practitioners class in British Columbia. That's going to make a huge difference in the delivery of health care right across this province.

Again, in 2001 we had no MRI in my community. If you needed an MRI, you came to Victoria. Not anymore. We have that facility in Nanaimo. There was no kidney dialysis capacity in my community. Today there is.

There were no advanced life support paramedics. That facility is coming to Nanaimo in May of 2005. It was not there in 2001, and I found out that plan has been 25 years in the making. For ten years of the NDP... Back in 2001 there were no ALS paramedics in Nanaimo and no plans to do it. That's what we have done.

I hear a lot of squawking from the opposition on seniors care. You know, the fact is that we are facing

difficult times. We have changed the approach to how we are going to deal with seniors care. We have a model in British Columbia which reflects the needs of our senior citizens and not the needs of some politicians or bureaucrats.

I have to tell you that in mid-Vancouver Island, while we can always use more, we have a significant investment going on in seniors care from the private sector, from Vancouver Island health authority and from B.C. Housing. That investment means that we are seeing more of our senior citizens finding more appropriate settings as they move through the latest stages of their lives. We see housing options for young adults and people with mental health problems, which were not there when the NDP was in power in 2001.

We see record health spending. It's worth recalling, you know, because we've heard a lot of rhetoric about health care spending. In 2001 this province spent \$9.5 billion on public health care. In 2005 that number has reached \$12.5 billion, and it's going up another \$800 million by 2008. Already under this government we have seen a \$3 billion increase in health care spending. Let's be clear when we're talking about government spending. An increase of \$3 billion is an increase — exactly that.

We have more surgeries than we ever had before. In 2001 under the NDP, 830,000 British Columbians were getting surgeries in this province. In 2003-04, the last year for which figures are available, at least to me, there was an increase of 68,000 surgeries to 898,000 in this province.

You know, we need some honesty in accounting here, and we have lots of things that suggest to me that British Columbia under this government is leading, is innovating, is finding ways to deal with the pressures of health care into the twenty-first century.

In British Columbia we have world-leading research organizations. The Michael Smith facility is obviously one that's mentioned a lot. It was in British Columbia that the SARS vaccine was originated. The

provincial government is making significant investments in the Michael Smith Foundation to build on that reputation for excellence in medical science that we have built in this province. We intend, in this government, to make sure that the world knows about that and to move forward on that.

We attract the most doctors in Canada into British Columbia.

[1155]

Can things get better? Of course they can. Continuous improvement should be the order of the day, whether it's in medical care or in any other part of our endeavours as a government or in our personal lives.

We need more addictions treatment in my community. We need more mental health services. Of course we do, and they are priorities for this government to deliver.

Is B.C. leading? You bet. We're leading in the development of a national pharmacare system. Everything that you've seen in the last four years since this government took office points to a leadership role for British Columbia and the development of a modern, responsive public health care system. I am delighted to move this motion.

Seeing the time, I think I should now request adjournment of this debate.

M. Hunter moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. M. de Jong moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 11:56 a.m.