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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR  
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**FIRST SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT**

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2005

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

Prayers.

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Statements

##### DEMOCRATIC RENEWAL

**J. Rustad:** Democratic renewal is a term that many people have used in our history. Currently in Canada, provincial governments and even the federal government are talking about democratic renewal. What does this really mean?

For us here in British Columbia and indeed across most of the democratic world, our democracy is based on the Westminster parliamentary system and electing our representatives with what is popularly known as first past the post. First past the post is designed as a simple system whereby voters pick their favourite candidate, and whoever receives the most votes on election night wins the election. This system is used by about 43 democratic countries around the world, including the United States, the United Kingdom, India and of course Canada.

But what is democratic renewal, and why are so many talking about it? According to the website [democraticrenewal.com](http://democraticrenewal.com), democratic renewal is the process of making governments and individual legislators more accountable to the public. I would like to point out that my mentioning the site or the content does not represent an endorsement in any way.

So if democratic renewal is about making legislators more accountable, is this really the issue? Is our democracy in British Columbia unaccountable? Has democracy in B.C. changed over the years? Or, perhaps, is it people's perception of democracy that has changed? Have tools like technology and the media that offer up-to-the-second reporting changed our perception of politics?

Over the years B.C. has had a relatively stable democracy. It has experimented with a form of preferential balloting, but ultimately the first-past-the-post system has served the people well. So why does there seem to be a large appetite for change? Perhaps one of the reasons was the results of the elections in 1991, 1996 and in 2001.

[1005]

The 1991 and 1996 elections resulted in a party winning a majority vote without winning the majority of votes. In 2001 the party winning the majority of votes won a lopsided majority of the seats — not that the previous government deserved to win these seats.

The past election results seem to have brought a focus on some troubles with democracy. But is it really the electoral system that has raised the appetite for change? In today's society the amount of information available to us and the rate at which information can be

accessed is phenomenal. We are truly in the middle of an information age. Could it be that this new tool is what's driving the apparent disconnect with voters? If it is, could it be that this new tool holds some potential answers around democratic renewal?

One symptom of the apparent frustration with democracy in today's society is a lack of voter participation. Some people believe that democracy is simply not working or that it just doesn't matter who they vote for, so why bother. Others believe that people are not interested because they are generally content. When things around them are going well and the bills are manageable, and they have food in the fridge, a TV to watch or a computer to surf the Internet, does inertia take over and keep people from participating in democracy?

Perhaps some parallels can be looked at in our society. Consider various service groups in our communities today. The vast majority of them are losing membership. Could this be signalling that people are just not interested in traditional civic connections? When you look at voter participation numbers, the one thing that stands out is the fact that each generation is participating in democracy at a lower rate than the previous one. In fact, the same trend can be seen in almost every western democracy regardless of the style of electing their representatives.

The introduction of the radio, then the TV, then computers and now the Internet have all had profound effects on our culture and society. They have changed our social interactions in a very profound way, and in many ways they have created more isolation. Is there a parallel that can be drawn between voter participation, civic participation and technological advancements?

Many governments in Canada are looking at ways of creating democratic renewal. I'd like to add that most are looking at B.C. and what is being done under the leadership of our Premier and are trying to find ways to do similar things.

The B.C. Liberals showed incredible leadership when they created the Citizens' Assembly. The idea of handing over the power of representation to a randomly selected group of citizens from around the province to allow them to debate about the foundations of our democracy and to empower them to put a referendum question to the people, quite frankly, is remarkable. I was not part of the caucus that made this decision, but I can say that many MLAs around the country felt a pang of fear from just the idea. To give such power to the people scares most elected representatives. "What might they say? What if their conclusion causes us not to form the next government?"

Here in B.C. true leadership has shone above the clamour. We forged ahead. The results were tantalizing. The majority of the people accepted the recommendation, but the referendum failed because it couldn't meet the threshold.

Lost in the wonder of the referendum results was one startling statistic. Even though this miraculous referendum occurred, an event and an opportunity that most have never seen in their lives, voter participation failed to make any significant gains. Could this be pro-

viding us with a clue around just what the voter is concerned with? Could this be suggesting that the method of electing representatives is only part of the overall problem?

I will say this. The work of the Citizens' Assembly is to be commended. They reviewed mountains of data and gave so much of their time to this effort. Their passion truly showed through. Many of the Citizens' Assembly were interested in one system or another, but in the end they were united in promoting their single choice. I respect the fact that their choice for the ballot question was the people's choice, free of political interference.

Hon. Speaker, I will end here. I look forward to any response.

**R. Fleming:** I appreciate very much the opportunity to respond to the remarks from the member for Prince George-Omineca on the subject of democratic renewal. Renewing our democracy is something that political leaders have been discussing for several decades, particularly on the North American continent.

[1010]

Beginning in the 1980s, we've seen declining participation in elections at almost all levels of government to the point where now a minority of citizens cast ballots for the most powerful officeholder in the world, the President of the United States.

The member from White Rock is fond of quoting the author Putnam, who also worries about declining voter behaviour. But he situates that in a much larger, cultural North American context — that is, the massive withdrawal of individual participation in civil society and the connection to local community itself.

The images from Paris, France, the other week serve as a reminder that democratic renewal isn't just about encouraging more pluralism in our electoral systems or modernizing our legislative assemblies to be more transparent, important though that may be. Democratic renewal implies that government must give new meaning and provide leadership that is framed by the concept and policies of an inclusive society in order that we achieve a more fully engaged citizenry.

A society committed to social justice is one where the rights and responsibilities of citizens are taken seriously and respected widely. Social and political scientists are already comparing Canada and France. They're noting the different approaches, for example, to immigration and the different way the state approaches settlement. Here we celebrate and officially encourage multiculturalism. In France there is an aggressive secularism and an official French identity motivated by concerns around the erosion of language and, ultimately, a sovereign identity.

In many European countries the phenomenon of declining voter participation is not observed. In Scandinavia and in southern European countries like Italy, voter participation is in the range of 80 percent to 90 percent. Importantly, as well, there is very little difference in these countries between the participation rates of young people 18 to 24 and older groups of voters.

Unfortunately, that is not the case in British Columbia. I very much appreciate the efforts of Elections B.C. and youth organizations in our province to address the issue of low voter turnout among young people. You know, less than half of young people in this province are even registered to vote, and a minority of those registered cast ballots. In the 2001 election the participation rate of young people eligible to vote was only 27 percent. Clearly, we need to do more.

I appreciate the member's suggestion — I think, in an article I have from the summer — to look at an Australian model of mandatory voting. Very few jurisdictions use this, but I have yet to meet an Australian who objects to it. It's not a draconian or punitive measure. It does not oblige someone to vote for a party or a candidate. Australians are free to spoil their ballot, register objections, but they must participate in the democratic process and exercise one of the most powerful rights in a free society: the right to vote.

I want to say a few things about voting systems, because Bill 14 was passed only the other week, unfortunately with fewer choices going forward on the 2008 referendum ballot than we would have liked. I favour proportional representation. I believe that supporters of all political parties should be fairly represented in some kind of proportion to the votes they cast. We have lowered the legitimacy of our system by electing majority governments that are far too disproportionate; 2001 comes to mind and 1996's result in this province. In a different system it could have resulted in a coalition government of either the centre left or the centre right.

You know which coalition I would have preferred. I favour an MMP model, because there are proven and tested ones that exist in many of the most robust democracies in the world today. Proportional systems, importantly, can be used as tools to ensure that there's fair representation for women, for minorities and for aboriginals in this chamber. Our Legislature should reflect the diversity of our society. I believe that MMP systems can actually represent rural and urban voters more fairly than the first-past-the-post system that we have today.

One of the criticisms of an MMP system is the stability of governments and what impacts this has on the economy. But MMP governments display as much stability as the current B.C. system in terms of the length of time of the administration.

[1015]

**J. Rustad:** I want to thank the member for Victoria-Hillside for his comments. There's no question that when you consider voter participation and the issues he raised, particularly the issues around France, this is a very timely debate and a very timely issue to be considering.

I just need to clarify one point, though. The member mentioned that I was advocating for mandatory voting. In actual fact, the mandatory voting was in the article, but it wasn't what I was advocating for. What I

was advocating for was the possibility of considering a tax incentive to encourage people to vote.

But in any case, the issue that the member has raised around Bill 14 is quite interesting. I find that the work of the Citizens' Assembly, quite frankly, included all groups around the province. They listened to every option, and they considered the MMP, the STV and, of course, the first-past-the-post as to whether they wanted to change. The majority of them went to STV.

Now, whether I agree or disagree with that, I think it's important that we respect the work the Citizens' Assembly has done. I think it's important that we respect what the question is that they wanted to put forward to the people. I'm glad we will be free to debate, but I don't think it's our place to come forward and say that we would like to have another option on the table, when clearly the Citizens' Assembly has put one forward. However, I digress somewhat here.

I would also like to point out the fact that here in B.C., we are considered a leader in democratic reform. Our government is considered to be one of the most open and accountable governments in Canada, and this is once again because of the remarkable leadership that our Premier has shown. But given what we have looked at, given the difficulties our democracy is facing in terms of voter participation, where is the next step? What more needs to be done to bring people back to a sense of civic responsibility or, perhaps, to remove the statement: "It doesn't matter"?

It appears that technology may have helped to create some of the problems, so perhaps technology may hold part of the solution. Whatever the ultimate solution is, I believe that voter participation is where a great amount of focus must be. Perhaps the ancient Athenians had it right. They believed in democracy so much — and in particular, they believed in the necessity for wide participation — that they actually paid people to vote. This was their single largest tax expenditure. Whichever way we may turn, one thing is certain: if our voter participation trend continues, the democratic authority of governance may be in jeopardy.

#### AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

**D. Chudnovsky:** Albert Einstein had a sign hanging in his office that read: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." There's a fundamental lesson to be learned from Einstein, the great scientist and humanitarian, that we need to take to heart as we search for ways to improve student learning. Unfortunately, there are those who would stand Einstein on his head when it comes to the evaluation and assessment of our students. They believe that everything that counts can be counted, and everything that can be counted counts.

[S. Hawkins in the chair.]

This attitude has had and continues to have a negative impact on our schools. It has led us to a kind of frenzied testing mania. High-stakes standardized tests

are more and more prevalent. Commentators and pundits, most of whom know very little about how children learn, are desperate for the results because they have convinced themselves that when the test results arrive, they know something.

What do standardized tests really tell us? I want to try to answer that question in a minute, but first a little story from my own 30 years' experience as a teacher. One of the texts in grade 11 is Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. I love working with kids on *Macbeth*. Some of the language and the poetry is remarkable. *Macbeth*, at the end of his days, bemoaning his own descent into ruthless ambition and evil, tells us that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

[1020]

One summer day it suddenly struck me that ten years after they were in my class, virtually none of the kids would remember anything about *Macbeth*. It was a momentarily frightening experience. If they didn't remember, then what was I doing? The answer, of course, is that the formal curriculum is only one part and often a relatively insignificant part of what teachers teach and what students learn. My students were learning to appreciate literature and language. My students were gaining the power to manipulate and decode complex messages. My students were experiencing, at least vicariously, the nature of evil, the power of love, the dangers of ambition. They were engaging each other in debate and discussion. They were gaining self-confidence by acting in class. They were learning to work collectively on projects. They were practising classroom and community democracy, and much more.

While all of those experiences and their impact on students can be assessed and evaluated, almost none of them can be measured or counted. As Einstein would remind us, in both the formal and informal curriculums, the things that count the most can't be counted. Stanford University professor Elliot Eisner writes that tests should be useful in predicting what students will do in other situations. They should have predictive validity. The trouble with standardized tests is that what they predict best are other test scores. Put another way, the most important thing students learn from writing tests is how to write tests.

Again, Elliot Eisner:

It is perfectly possible to raise test scores and at the same time to diminish the quality of education.... It's perfectly possible to set up cram courses...so that a school will look good because of test scores.... In the process the curriculum gets diminished, what is taught gets narrowed, test scores increase marginally, and the public thinks schools are getting better.

Moreover, standardized tests are not designed to identify the specific weaknesses of specific students and to determine ways to remediate them. They tend to measure what is easy to measure — lower-order recall — and penalize high-order thinking — analyzing, synthesizing, forming hypotheses and problem-solving. Test preparation and administration take up valuable

time. They're expensive and complicated to schedule and administer, and there are many other problems.

However, we need to move on to a much more relevant question: what is the alternative to this flawed reliance on standardized tests? The answer begins by taking seriously the truism that children learn in diverse ways. As a result, assessment must recognize the abilities of each student and be valuable to that student in terms of her individual development as a human being. It's not that complicated. Some students are auditory learners, some are visual learners, and some are kinesthetic learners, and there are a myriad of combinations of these.

So we must use and value tests, quizzes and exams but also oral reports, student demonstrations, skits and other physical activities. We certainly need to assign and evaluate written reports and essays, but we must also nurture and assess leadership skills, cooperative processes, self-discipline and self-expression. We need to teach computational skills, grammar and scientific principles, but not forget to support and assess critical thinking, the development of citizenship skills and aesthetic performance and sensibility.

What all of this requires is respect and support for classroom teachers working with students on a day-to-day basis. Authentic assessment is only possible if the resources are available for teachers to deal with students both as a group of children of more or less the same age and developmental level but also as individuals with specific strengths, weaknesses, abilities and challenges.

Most important, we need to remember that our biggest task in assessing the progress of our children is not to convince ourselves that some number on some test that measures, fundamentally, test-taking ability is particularly important. Rather, our job is to interact on an ongoing basis with every child, to engage in a dialogue with her and her parents about how things are going, to identify both abilities and weaknesses, and to devise strategies to strengthen the former and deal successfully with the latter.

We must remember that our students are not test-taking machines and that turning them into fodder for international testing corporations is neither necessary nor particularly helpful. Rather, our children are citizens in the making. Their needs, desires and passions are diverse and wide-ranging. Our evaluation tools must, therefore, be just as wide-ranging and diverse. That is authentic assessment.

**R. Lee:** It is my pleasure to rise in the House to respond to the statement made by the member for Vancouver-Kensington regarding authentic assessment of students. The member spoke eloquently about the inadequacy of standard tests. However, the member missed the point.

[1025]

Besides standard tests in school, there are other tests in school offered in the classroom by teachers. In fact, there is much research done in terms of multiple abilities, how to measure multiple abilities. In the late '70s Prof. Robert Sternburg, a psychologist at Harvard

University, was a pioneer in raising the issue of multiple abilities. Over the past two decades Howard Gardner, a cognitive psychologist from Harvard University, has been developing a theory of multiple abilities, skills and talents. Beyond the traditional verbal-linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities, we must also recognize many other abilities such as visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical-rhythmical, interpersonal and intrapersonal. All those abilities are important.

To measure these abilities, we need multi-dimensional instructions — as the member said, learning and assessment. It is necessary to develop tools moving away from a single dimension of learning to multi-dimensional learning, from a single number of measures to many measures, from the contextualized tests of short answers, fill-in-the-blank, true-or-false answers — to contextualized answers and tasks such as performances and projects. I believe that kind of research is available. However, we must also develop test assessment in consideration of the delivery, the organization and the language used.

If we apply the principle of authentic assessment, the delivery is superior. However, we want to put more emphasis on research and content. In applying the principles of authentic assessment to the speech, I would say that it seems the member has failed one of the fundamental aspects of a successful research project, which is to gather all the available information and provide an unbiased evaluation.

In British Columbia an annual assessment known as the fundamental skills assessment is conducted to see how students in grades four and seven are performing in reading, writing and math. The reading, comprehension and numeracy components consist of multiple-choice questions, which is not authentic, but it also contains open-ended questions. The writing test consists of first drafts of two writing tasks. Open-ended questions and writing tasks do in fact satisfy the criteria of authentic assessment.

This year 79 percent of grade four students and 77 percent of grade seven students are meeting or exceeding expectations in reading. These are excellent results. In fact, B.C. students' achievements are among the highest in the world. We have set high standards because we know every student will need a solid foundation to succeed after graduation.

The main purposes of assessment are for students, teachers, parents, administrators and legislators to know how well students are meeting the curricular objectives. The fundamental skills assessment results, together with other information collected by the teachers, are important information for district accountability contracts and school growth plans developed by school planning councils.

**D. Chudnovsky:** I want to thank the member for Burnaby North for his comments, many of which are not inconsistent with some of the things that I had to say. I also want to express my appreciation for his evaluation of my presentation as a failure. Perhaps

what we can do is organize for my parents to come in with me and meet with him, as the instructor, and we can have the kind of dialogue that is a characteristic of authentic assessment. It's the kind of thing that we have now happening in our schools, and I think it's an important part of the evaluation procedure.

[1030]

The problem, of course, is one of emphasis, Madam Speaker. No one says that there shouldn't be testing. Of course there should, and there should be a range of testing, as the member said. The problem that we face is that in our jurisdiction and in many others there has developed an overemphasis on the use of standardized testing for inappropriate purposes which drives the time used, scheduling, curriculum and emphasis of teachers and students in classrooms.

I want to tell one anecdote which I think expresses my point of view and our point of view clearly. I was speaking a number of years ago to a senior administrator in one of the school districts immediately after the so-called league tables, the Fraser Institute league tables — which tell us nothing at all that we already didn't know — came out in the *Vancouver Province*. "You know, the school that ranks highest in the so-called Fraser Institute report card, published in the newspaper, in my district," said this senior administrator, "is the school that has the most bullying and the most racism in our school district."

That's the problem, among other things. What are we testing, what conclusions are we drawing, and where does that drive the school curriculum? The member for Burnaby North made some good points, but if we continue down the road to depending on standardized tests as the major component and the driver of our school system, we will forget all of those things that Albert Einstein told us count but can't be counted.

#### GATEWAY TRANSPORTATION PLAN

**M. Polak:** I rise today to speak about the gateway transportation plan, a plan that is eagerly awaited by residents of my riding and surrounding ridings. It's my hope that by the time my statement is complete, this House will all agree that gateway is essential not only for the benefit of my constituents but for the economic well-being of the province.

Not that long ago TransLink commissioned an Ipsos-Reid survey to find out what the number-one issue seen by residents of the GVRD was. They came back with some surprising results. Rating even higher than health on that issue scale was the issue of transportation. This is something that, if you live in a place like Langley, as I do, becomes very close to home for you.

It came home to me on a weekend when I was hoping to be into Vancouver for a dinner that began at six o'clock. I studiously left my house at 4 p.m., expecting that I would be there in ample time, perhaps even enough time to visit one of my friends in downtown Vancouver for a cup of coffee. But rather than be on time, it took me longer than two hours to drive to

downtown Vancouver on a Sunday afternoon. That is just an unacceptable wait, and it causes all sorts of other problems.

But this is only how it has happened in my life. There's a whole history to this. In the past 20 years the population of the lower mainland has increased by 750,000 people, an amount equal to the population of New Brunswick. Our best projections indicate that we will see another one million people added to the region over the next 25 years.

Along with increased population, the lower mainland has experienced significant change related to how and where people move around the lower mainland. No longer do people only travel back and forth from their homes in the suburbs into Vancouver to work. In 2005 the number of Vancouver residents working in the suburbs has exceeded the number of suburban residents working in Vancouver by 9 to 1. Pitt River Bridge traffic volume has tripled since 1985. The Port Mann Bridge currently carries more traffic than the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. By 2031, truck traffic will increase by another 50 percent.

[1035]

There's no question that this region has experienced massive growth and change in the last two decades. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the region's road infrastructure. The last major road improvement project in the lower mainland was the Alex Fraser Bridge in 1986. The results of this neglect are experienced daily by frustrated commuters and truckers across the lower mainland.

The B.C. Trucking Association estimates that trucks are stopped or slowed 75 percent of the time in the lower mainland. Congestion-related idling is having a negative effect on air quality. Heavy truck traffic on major routes and community streets is not only inefficient; it is a safety hazard. Transit is unable to operate on the Port Mann Bridge because there's too much congestion to keep to a reliable schedule. The estimated cost to the B.C. economy resulting from this gridlock is a shocking \$1.5 billion annually.

All of this evidence points inescapably to the need for a comprehensive, long-term solution, and yet despite the overwhelming need for action, there are those who continue to believe that the gateway project should not go ahead. They argue that the gateway project will worsen congestion, increase air pollution and reduce funds available for public transit. Nothing could be further from the truth. Gateway is not just a road-building exercise. Through the gateway project, the lower mainland will finally move forward through a comprehensive response to the needs of lower mainland residents and commuters. The Pitt River Bridge and Mary Hill interchange project will include a high-level bridge to replace two swing bridges and an interchange to replace the existing intersection at Lougheed Highway and Mary Hill bypass.

The new bridge will allow for flexible lane allocation with potential for three general-purpose lanes going in either direction or a combination that includes HOV lanes. In the future two more lanes could be

added, and the high-level clearance will let marine traffic pass unobstructed. This project will achieve improved travel time and safety while eliminating unexpected closures.

The south Fraser perimeter road will be a four-lane, 80-kilometre-an-hour route on the south side of the Fraser River from Delta Port to 176th Street and the Golden Ears connector in Surrey-Langley. This will create an efficient trade route to serve industrial areas from Delta Port to Port Kells. It will relieve congestion by removing heavy truck traffic from major routes and community streets.

The most well-known component of gateway is the Port Mann Bridge. The Port Mann Bridge right now is the worst choke point in B.C.'s most important trade corridor, Highway 1. Along with freeing commuters from unacceptable traffic delays, this project will provide for expanding HOV lanes to Langley as well as an expanded regional cycling network.

It's time to build a lower mainland transportation network that will help us reach our true economic potential. It's time for a comprehensive infrastructure project that will serve this province for generations to come. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the residents of Langley city and township, I say it's time for gateway. We've waited long enough.

**S. Simpson:** I appreciate the member's comments. When she talks about the gateway program, there are a whole range of aspects of that I think there's a lot of support for — the south Fraser perimeter road, some of the other pieces that are there. The public debate, the debate that the member talks about, really revolves around the question of the bridge, of course, and the question of the expansion of the highway.

On this side we've thought about this long and hard, and we have four questions that we think need to be answered. At this point those answers have not been provided. The first question is: will the proposal actually solve the problem of the congestion? The member is quite right. The congestion south of the Fraser is a very, very large problem. People there have a right to be very concerned about it. The congestion does affect goods. It affects commuters, and we need to address that problem. Nobody would deny that.

The question is: how do we address that? The sense we have is that there has not been a complete discussion around this. All the evidence is there is not a place in North America.... I would challenge the member to find one example in North America where an expansion of a road or a bridge has led to the resolution of a congestion problem over a period of, say, five to ten years after it was built. They fill up. There has to be another way to address this. That discussion has not been had. It needs to be had. We're not convinced the problem will be solved.

[1040]

The second question is: what will be the impact on the livable region strategic plan? That is a very important piece of work that was done in cooperation by all the municipalities of the Greater Vancouver regional

district. It looks to try to deal with very significant and challenging growth management issues. There is a plan there. It is a plan that is making incremental improvements; it's a plan that's working. It needs more work, but it's working. To do this without any consideration at all — and, frankly, the cavalier attitude of the minister who's refused to talk to the GVRD about this — of the livable region strategic plan is to just dismiss the whole question of sustainability out of hand.

The third question here is: what's the impact on the agricultural land reserve? This is a fundamental issue in the valley. It's a fundamental issue for us. We need to think about impacts on the agricultural land reserve. We need to think of the pressure when we sprawl, when we continue to grow out, pressures for both residential and commercial enterprise on agricultural land. We're seeing it in community after community, where the pressure's on to remove pieces of agricultural land in order for other purposes. Some of those may be warranted, but in large part, we need to make sure we protect our agricultural land. These pressures add to that.

The fourth issue is: what's the impact on air quality, climate change and greenhouse gases? What's the impact on Kyoto? We don't have an answer to that today. We don't know what that impact is, and we need to assess that, and we need to assess this plan against those questions.

The minister has said he will release reports by the end of this year. He has said he will talk to people, though I have to note that he's also said it won't change his mind. That's not consultation. But he has said he'll release those reports. Those reports that the minister is going to release by the end of this year need to answer those four questions in a complete and substantive way. I look forward to those answers, and then I look forward to a full public discussion on this.

If you're going to spend what could be a couple of billion dollars by the time you're done, you'd better fix the problem, and you'd better do it in a way that is sustainable long term. There is no evidence today that, in fact, will occur, and we need to satisfy ourselves that will occur if this plan moves forward. We haven't seen that to date. The government, the minister, has an obligation to show in clear and unequivocal terms that it will provide the solution. I look forward to, in fact, seeing that from the minister.

At this point, though, I think what we need to say is that there is a lot of discussion that needs to happen. There's a lot of evidence that has to be put on the table. We have to actually find out whether we're solving the problem. Nothing at this point suggests this will actually solve the problem in the long term — short term, couple of years, yeah, maybe. It will ease the problem for a couple of years. It doesn't solve it long term. There's no evidence of that. All the evidence is, in fact, to the contrary. We need to do that, because the last thing we want to do is create expectations south of the river that this is going to fix a congestion issue for people that it may not fix, that it will ease for a couple of years sometime after 2010.

**M. Polak:** I want to address quickly and from a practical level a number of the questions that the member has raised. Certainly, there's always concern when we move ahead with large projects that we don't want to see unintended consequences. But I want to take you to the picture that you see if you're coming from Langley. If you talk to someone from Langley who deals with this every day, they'll tell you that when it comes to congestion and "building your way out of it" with respect to the Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1, the cars are already there. The people are already there. This is a pent-up demand from a decade of neglect in road infrastructure construction.

In return, we talk about the need to not put pressure on the ALR. We've seen the actions of the ALC in this matter already. Even in developing small road improvement projects with our local township, there has been great difficulty and, in fact, a refusal to remove a very small portion of land in order to allow a road realignment. The ALC is very cautious when determining removal from the ALR, and certainly for those of us living south of the Fraser, the experience is not one of an Agricultural Land Commission that is letting land go willy-nilly, nor would they for a project like gateway. It would involve community discussion and community planning. When we talk about greenhouse gases, all you have to do is sit waiting for the Port Mann Bridge behind a smelly truck, and you get a very clear idea of what's contributing substantially to air pollution as a result of idling traffic and congestion.

[1045]

But I want to deal mainly with the livable region strategic plan. I know that this is a plan that was developed in good faith. This is a plan that had people wanting to do the best for their communities, but it made some assumptions that haven't borne out. It made some assumptions that the centres of growth concentration were going to be the Burrard peninsula, the northeast sector and north Surrey. It's based on data that is at least a decade old, and it hasn't reflected the kind of changes. You can plan all you want. You can do the best job you want planning for where people are going to go and where they're going to move, but no one would have predicted the way that we've seen people now have their jobs and living entirely in the suburbs. There are a large number of people who no longer make that commute into Vancouver, and some of them, in fact, commute the opposite direction.

So certainly we need to respond to communities. We need to respond to residents, to taxpayers, who've made their choice about where they want to live. It's not our job as a government to tell people where they ought to live and how they ought to live their lives. It's our job to work together with them to provide for their needs as they build their own lives and their own prosperity for themselves.

The livable region strategy is certainly a wonderful idea, but unfortunately, in 2005 it's no longer realistic. When you talk to people south of the Fraser, they're quite resentful of the idea that they are to be told how

their communities ought to develop, and in fact, they have some positive plans that will move them forward.

## PRIVATIZATION

**G. Gentner:** I want to take this opportunity to talk briefly about privatization, an ideology that may have merit in some instances but in many cases can be a complete disaster.

We have a legacy under W.A.C. Bennett that saw private companies — primarily monopolies — nationalized. It was a pragmatic assessment that capital could be raised cheaper by the state, delivered more efficiently and managed in the public interest, and was integrated into a system that delivered, rather than a patchwork of private companies. Government, for a range of societal functions — primarily social and health functions, such as infrastructure, hospitals and schools — delivers these functions directly and effectively.

I want to start from the get-go to explain that as a former municipal councillor who had to oversee many multi-million-dollar projects, I worked with the private sector to complete large construction projects, and the municipal government did partner with non-profit societies. However, to hand over a public asset to a for-profit private company to manage and deliver services was something never contemplated. You see, public-private partnerships — P3s, as they are often called — can cost a government more money than is bargained for simply because of a lack of accountability. Contrary to what we may hear, risks are rarely transferred to the private partner.

Privatization was, and still is, a guiding principle of this B.C. Liberal government, which believes it's the panacea for what is always wrong with government. To be fair, previous governments have privatized functions of government. However, privatization notions have certainly accelerated under this government during the past four years. All extreme right-wing governments believe that anything the public sector can do, the private sector can always do better. The approach is dogmatic and hasty.

In his book on the Vander Zalm administration, Graham Leslie's words seem to have an uncanny similarity, if not prophetic resemblance, to what's happening here today. He writes:

The common pattern about privatization is its excessive haste. The government did not have a plan or anticipate the consequences. The net result is that public assets were sold for significantly less than their true worth and that some very important services have been transferred to the private sector, where they have deteriorated in quantity and quality.

The government's contract with Maximus, for example, comes to mind: a privatized program instituted by the government with no real business case or long-term analysis. The company today is paying fines for poor-performance levels anticipated, most likely, as part of its business costs. Unfortunately, the government refuses to make public what those fines really are.

There is no improvement to service as seen before the service was privatized. In fact, services are inferior and will prove to be more expensive. The government cut staff significantly before turning MSP systems and operations to Maximus, so today people compare how bad delivery was before or how it was as bad as compared to the day the services were first cut in order to accommodate the private company.

[1050]

When the government decided to privatize our Medical Services Plan delivery, it did so with no proven cost savings, which begs the question: why did the government do it in the first place? We have witnessed massive sell-offs of our assets, downsizing, outsourcing and deregulating. However, deregulating is not what this discussion is about. Perhaps at another time we can discuss the implications behind deregulating energy and the fiasco as seen with Enron and what happened in California.

The B.C. Buildings Corp. is a classic example of privatization. With the government preaching for more efficiency in its own government, one would have expected that the restructuring shape of BCBC would have started from the top-down immediately following completion of the Liberals' core reviews three years ago. But the government didn't do that. The B.C. Buildings Corp. was top-heavy.

The government went out to begin fixing from the bottom up. In BCBC's annual report for '04-05, the corporation, after privatizing half of its workforce, admitted there was a need to streamline organizational structure to reduce management overhead and management layers. If killing BCBC was the plan from the beginning, why didn't the government move it into a ministry three years ago and reduce management layers then? Why? Because the government did not have a plan.

Since the Liberals took control in 2001, the B.C. Buildings Corp. underwent a prolonged period of uncertainty and chaos created by guarded core reviews that for years undermined the workplace. After BCBC's privatized operations and maintenance contract to WSI, BLJC or Johnson Controls, restructuring costs related to workforce readjustments were in the order of over \$6.5 million. In the end the so-called one-third of the savings expected by privatizing could be eaten up by restructuring and transferring costs alone.

Finally, BCBC was obliterated before any real quantified performance review of the provider. Again, in the quest for efficiencies, the government will insist that privatization is necessary. In the auto industry full-blown private car insurance would disprove this point. Incrementally, the government is privatizing ICBC, an auto insurer that is the envy of the motorists throughout all of North America. The government has opened the gate for private auto insurers on the optional side with the assertion that ICBC had to increase its reserves to high private insurers' levels. Abandoning compulsory auto insurance brings greater risk and more liability to ICBC. By banning compulsory insurance, ICBC is vulnerable to a market of high-risk driv-

ers, while private insurers could one day offer discriminatory rates for the good drivers.

ICBC could collapse. B.C. public car insurance programs are one of the cheapest insurance rates in all of Canada. ICBC is a national success story that was derived by Bob Strachan during the Barrett years of the NDP in 1974.

**R. Sultan:** I'm pleased to respond to the member's comments on privatization. It's an important topic worthy of debate in this House.

Trends in private versus government ownership of enterprise are subject to long cycles. In order to restore employment after the collapse of the Great Depression, governments became entrepreneurs virtually without limit, and this continued for about 50 years, well into the 1980s. Then the great sell-off began — the insolvent, the non-competitive and the gobblers of taxpayer money on a grand scale: Air Canada; Sydney Steel and Coal; Canada Air; Petro-Canada and, closer to home, BCRIC, just to cite a few examples. It was the restructuring of what Harry Swain, a senior civil servant, once labelled "failures of the people's capitalism," but not without strident opposition.

[1055]

Diogenes — who might be Mr. Dimitrov in civilian life, but whomever, and certainly an ardent supporter of the benches opposite — recently declared, "Privatization is a process of robbing the people in order to favour and enrich particular private interests, wealthy forces or classes," and refers to: "More vile evidence of active corporate evil undertaken to assure obscene profits," etc., etc. Ah, yes. Class struggle, corporate evil, obscene profits — I think I've heard that tune before, to a Cuban beat, I believe, or some other place where you can't buy shoes or toothpaste.

In a learned paper McGill University's Professor Errunza listed some of the motivations for privatization: to acquire revenue for government, promote efficiency, reduce political interference, develop capital markets, broaden share ownership and introduce competition. Well, who can argue against that? As a matter of fact, I can — selectively.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Let me suggest activities that are not, at least to my eye, obvious candidates for privatization. Let's start with the public school system — a foundation of equality in our society. Let's add a significant chunk of the health insurance system so as to skirt the dark underside of what might be called the American system. And public safety. When we arm the constabulary, I feel more comfortable when the police chief isn't focusing his attention on the stock price. Defence. Central banking. The making of treaties. The regulation of monopolies. Monopolies, and I would add oligopolies, merit public oversight. So I'm all in favour of increasing the capabilities of our B.C. Utilities Commission.

A lot of other things are candidates for privatization, including the adding up of columns of figures; the

answering of telephones; the mopping of floors; and, yes, the building and operation of public infrastructure. Since the member opposite seems to be an unquestioning admirer of state enterprise, I can't resist pointing out that this town, this very town, is at risk due to a large error of state enterprise. If one traces the origin of that error, one comes right back to a corner office in this very building. I refer to the uncertainty of electrical supply aggravated by the cancellation of the Duke Point project after the unfortunate expenditure of \$100 million-plus.

To be fair, this scheme seems to have started out in Port Alberni as an initiative of the Premier's office of the day. His electrical brainwave was later masked by the Premier's even more costly and entertaining marine enterprises. Here's a great Crown corporation responding to political interference and struggling to find the courage to admit a mistake once it became apparent. I submit that a non-government organization would have been less likely to be subject to political meddling and more likely to cut its losses when circumstances changed — a textbook case of the vulnerability of people's capitalism.

I believe the members opposite, many of them at least, already understand these things, for in previous lives — again, referring to this very town — they have applauded the use of P3s to build community infrastructure, even when active trade unionists publicly condemned them for "betraying the working class people of this community." Case closed.

**G. Gentner:** To do the comparison with private versus public, there is a little town straddling the border of Saskatchewan and Alberta called Lloydminster. You can go there anytime and ask Albertans why it is that somehow their cars are registered on the Saskatchewan side of town as opposed to the Alberta side of town. It's because of low costs and efficiencies — a classic example of how public auto insurance works.

I am concerned relative to what's happened to our friends south of the line. The United States spends more on health care than any other.... In 2002 total expenditures were \$1.2 trillion, about 16 percent of the gross domestic product, while Canada, believe it or not, was only 9.6 percent. Drug prices in the U.S. are among the highest in the world. At the same time, 44 million people are without health insurance, and it's estimated that about the same number are inadequately insured. The American health system is market-oriented and dominated by private actions.

[1100]

From the other side, it's clear that this is the direction this government wants to go, and we have to be steadfast on this side and take this government to task — line by line, project by project, provider by provider. We will stand for the people of British Columbia and ensure that the private sector never takes over the risks of the public service provision. Where costs exceed revenues, private operators respond by demanding subsidies, raising charges, cutting necessary invest-

ment and maintenance, and sometimes walking away. We will take this government to task.

**N. Simons:** I ask leave to introduce some guests.

Leave granted.

### Introductions by Members

**N. Simons:** I'm just very, very pleased to notice in the gallery a group of students from Elphinstone Secondary in the beautiful town of Gibsons. I'm very pleased to welcome them here today along with their two teachers, Jenny Garrels and Mr. Sopow, who is a recent graduate from that high school. I don't want to say too recent. I'd like to just ask the House to please make them feel very welcome.

**Hon. C. Richmond:** I call second reading of Bill M202.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. members, the unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with M202 without disturbing the priorities of items preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

### Second Reading of Bills

#### CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM ACT, 2005

**C. James:** I'm pleased to rise in support of the Campaign Finance Reform Act, 2005.

It's very important for all of us as politicians to take a look at improving our democracy, to take a look at removing the widespread perception among our citizens that institutional campaign contributions to political parties result in undue influence over decisions that affect the public.

We all saw, this past weekend, our municipal elections going on. We saw a very low voter turnout, which is a great deal of concern to everyone, and we're hearing comments now. After the last provincial election we heard similar kinds of comments about the fact that people don't seem as engaged in the political process as they should be or as we'd want them to be. We all know that for democracy to be healthy, we need to have people engaged in that discussion and debate. The more voices that get involved in that discussion, the healthier democracy will be. The more diversity of voices we have involved in that discussion, the healthier it will be.

We believe that this act will go some way to contributing to public confidence in British Columbia's democratic institutions. Since I became leader of our party, I've travelled extensively throughout our province talking to ordinary British Columbians about the kinds of changes that they'd like to see in our province. What's clear to me is that British Columbians do believe passionately in our democracy, that they do ap-

preciate having a local representative to be able to contact in their community. We've all known about that, and we all experienced it — in particular, this past weekend.

It's clear that people want an elected official to be able to talk to, to voice their concerns and to stand up and represent them. In doing so, the public certainly expects that decisions made here in this chamber result from no other consideration than the broad public interest. That's a very important key to our democracy, and as I said last week, all of us in this House, in my opinion, failed to meet that public test for transparency and accountability.

The passage of this act, I think, will send a very strong message that B.C.'s political representatives take very seriously our democratic responsibility to the citizens who elected us. Under this bill, if we take a look at the details of the bill, individual British Columbians will contribute to political parties. Institutions will not.

[1105]

The principle underlying this bill is very simple: every British Columbian should have equal access to legislators and input on decisions that affect their lives. This principle right now is diminished by the perception that the political parties are beholden to big campaign contributors. We all know that's a perception but a perception that has an opportunity, I think, to weaken democracy in B.C.

In addition, if we take a look at limiting political contributions to individuals only, this bill also establishes provisions for Elections B.C. to conduct a full, comprehensive review of political financing in British Columbia. It provides an opportunity for the public to have their say.

What kind of system is the public interested in when it comes to election financing? What kind of process would they like to take a look at? We've seen a number of systems implemented across this country, and there are a number of systems that could be looked at. The Chief Electoral Officer, in going out through this bill to the public and receiving information and feedback and taking a look at other jurisdictions, has the opportunity to report on the strengths and weaknesses of each of those systems and to give the public a chance to have a say.

We saw, over the past four years, some great strength in having the Citizens' Assembly. It was a forward-looking approach and an approach that had a real strength in giving the public a chance to talk about how our officials are elected in British Columbia. This bill could provide the same kind of opportunity — an opportunity through the Chief Electoral Officer for the public to have a say around what they'd like to see as to the way elections are financed in our province.

I just want to talk about a couple of jurisdictions, because this isn't something new to British Columbia. This isn't something we've tabled because it's unique to our province. This is something we're seeing across the country and around the world. If we take a look at Manitoba, in 2001 Manitoba passed the Election Finances Act, and in Manitoba only individuals can con-

tribute to a candidate in the provincial election. Annual contributions are limited. They're limited to a combined total of \$3,000. So not only have they said that only individuals can contribute to political parties, but they've also put a limit on the amount that those people can contribute to the individuals.

I think it's important to take a look at different jurisdictions, because this isn't something that is passed by governments of the same political stripe. This is something that, in fact, has been looked at across our country at different times and by different governments of different political stripes. If we take a look at Quebec, in 1978 election financing reform was passed in Quebec — 1978. So they were taking a look at how we finance our campaigns. In Quebec, under their legislation, again, only individuals may contribute to political parties. Individual contributions are eligible for a maximum tax credit of \$300. And again, individual contributions are limited to a combined total of \$3,000 annually.

We know that the federal government has also passed campaign finance. Again, we see that at the federal level corporations and unions are not able to contribute to political parties.

Ontario is an interesting one to take a look at. Ontario right now — and I give credit to the government — has taken a lead from our province and is putting together their own citizens' assembly. They are, in fact, going through a review with their citizens' assembly on looking at how their elections occur, how people are elected. At the same time, they've asked their citizens' assembly to actually also take a look at campaign financing reform. They've expanded the mandate so that we can not only see the election financing dealt with but so that we can also see how people are elected in the province. I think that's a good example and a reinforcement for the bill that we've introduced.

Again, we have success to be able to point to. This isn't something we would try and then wonder whether it was going to be successful. We have jurisdictions, as I've pointed out, that have proven that this works, that have demonstrated that a higher standard of political accountability is not only possible; it's also the right thing to do.

[1110]

In British Columbia I think the time has come to enact campaign finance reform. By taking action now, legislators can ensure a level playing field for political parties, but most importantly in all of this, a level playing field for all British Columbians. Build back that confidence and trust. Build back that integrity that people have — that when they vote for an elected official, the elected official is going to make decisions based on the public view and what's good for British Columbians, not the perception that people are going to make decisions based on what donation went where and who provided that donation.

In 2003 the B.C. New Democrats voted overwhelmingly to support an end to corporate and union donations. In fact, in our 2005 campaign platform we committed to amending the Election Act to prohibit corpo-

rations and unions from giving money to political parties. Right now the B.C. Election Act, as we all know, imposes no limits on corporate, union or individual donations. If passed by this House, this bill represents a fundamental shift in British Columbia politics, a shift that puts individual citizens at the centre of our democracy.

I want to close off by just taking us back to the issue of building public confidence in democracy, the lack of involvement by individuals in the political process, the apathy that we see when it comes to voter turnout — whether it was the municipal election or whether it was a provincial election — the lack of engagement by youth in getting involved in politics and having an opportunity to be able to have a say.

While there are a number of reasons for that, I think one of those reasons has to do with campaign financing and the perception that if people get out and get involved, and if they get out and vote, their vote doesn't count as much as someone who's contributed some dollars. We have an opportunity in this House. We have a unique opportunity to be able to support this bill, to be able to rebuild that support and to be able to say to the public of British Columbia: "Your vote counts, your vote matters, and you are the one who is influencing democracy."

**J. Yap:** I appreciate this opportunity to rise to speak against this bill. This is a great opportunity to have this discussion because I do appreciate that democracy, which is why we're here, is a precious concept which we are all a part of and which we all value. Elections happen as part of the democratic process. We enjoy our democratic process, thanks to the legacy that's been handed down to us from generations before us. There are, of course, the practical realities of elections as part of the democratic process, the practical realities of what goes into an election campaign — people and resources. Resources, of course, involve financing.

Why do we have financing? We have financing so that we can, as political parties on all parts of the spectrum, engage in reasoned communication and debate on important issues and to get our message out. Political parties representing people of a point of view have to be able to get their message out, to be able to engage in debate and persuasion, to promote their views as part of a democratic engagement and the political process.

[1115]

Whenever money is involved, of course, controls are needed. I would submit that what we have in place, while not perfect, does provide a measure of controls in terms of ensuring that we have proper declaration of the source of campaign funds.

The Leader of the Opposition has, in her comments, made an interesting point about equal access to politicians, which is a worthy concept to ensure that we have equal access among all citizens. I find it interesting that the president of the opposition party is, in fact, an active leader in a union, which is an institution. So

that certainly speaks to the unequal access to politicians.

One of the issues that we need to focus on, I believe, is the concept of third-party financing, which is apparently not referred to in this bill. This is an important concept because, as we saw in the most recent election, there was a significant investment in political activity by third parties. Included in this group of third parties were, of course, unions.

For example, in the disclosures that were published by Elections B.C. — and this is all public information — and reported by various media sources, the NDP received direct donations from unions totalling \$1.9 million. The same unions spent \$3.6 million on direct third-party advertising in support of the NDP during the election period — significant dollars. This does not reflect the millions of dollars that were spent prior to the election period — significant amounts of dollars.

Advocacy groups engage in discourse and campaign for their point of view. Business also participates in the political process, but we know that when an advocacy group decides to engage in the political process, they represent a point of view. Business gets involved in the political process through donations, also presenting a point of view — that is, wanting the best possible government so we can have a strong economy, so business can continue to thrive and provide jobs that benefit all British Columbians.

I'd like to speak a little bit about the concept of individuals who have the democratic right to engage in the political process and to choose — and should have the opportunity to choose — which political party they support. There's no argument with the Leader of the Opposition that that should be the case. However, we have a situation today where members of unions, through their dues, are obliged to support a political party which they may not personally support, and that is just not right.

[1120]

I have to question the sincerity of these proposals in this bill, given what I've shared with the House. Accordingly, I cannot support this bill and urge all members to also not support this bill.

**G. Robertson:** I'd like to start by just running through some summary points related to campaign financing and where B.C. is on the spectrum in this country.

B.C., unfortunately, shares the distinction with Alberta of having the fewest safeguards against big money dominating politics. We're at the bottom of the list. Between 1996 and the end of 2003 corporations and businesses put over \$28 million into the B.C. Liberal Party, which accounted for 68 percent of its donations. In the same period of time labour unions put over \$2.7 million into the B.C. NDP, which accounted for 10 percent of the party's donations — so collectively over \$30 million between '96 and 2003 from these organizations into the parties.

Corporations and unions also spend significantly on third-party election advertising and organizing in

B.C., which the member for Richmond-Steveston brought up. I'll speak to that a little bit later. There are no limits on this activity, which the government knows well.

By allowing the donations from these economic players — the corporations and unions — we're basically creating the opportunity for B.C.'s democracy to be corrupted by an expectation of financial return from non-voters. By these non-voters, there is an expectation that comes along with that money.

I want to start into a little more detail on buying influence and what it means when this money moves into the political realm. We saw several years ago, in 2002, when a minister of this B.C. government was forced to step aside temporarily for allegations of undermining investigation into a salmon farming company. Part of that story was that the same company was a major donor to the minister's party.

It's very rare to come across evidence like this where there is a specific intervention on behalf of campaign contributors. Thankfully, it's even rarer that the actual connection is established. In this case none was established, but once we allow campaign contributions from economic actors like corporations and unions, we have to face up to the fundamental fact that even without the direct linkage in place, contributors do expect a pattern of financially beneficial governance. That is an expectation.

Both the donors and recipients know that and that the future of political contributions depends on something like this taking place. It's nuanced, but it exists. In this regard, when you allow corporations and unions to donate, you create that environment. You're consciously allowing the systemic buying of influence in B.C. politics by big-money interests.

When Manitoba and Quebec banned corporate and union donations, not only did they end the buying of influence, but they also capped the donations of wealthy individuals in recognition of another very important point in our democracy. That is that voters' wealth should not be the main determinant of political access and influence.

I'll talk for a minute here about political speech. Political speech is a technical term. There's a diverse debate about how we govern ourselves, and this is what is known as political speech. The values that are associated with meaningful political speech — freedom and diversity being the primary values — are protected explicitly in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and in subsequent interpretations of the Charter by the Supreme Court of Canada.

Section 2 of the Charter protects the freedom of expression and association. Section 3 has been interpreted to protect meaningful participation of voters in elections, including the right to be adequately informed of all viewpoints and not having anyone dominate the debate. The Supreme Court recognized that the rights in sections 2 and 3 must be reconciled and, in doing so, has established the primacy of electoral fairness and upholding reasonable limits on expression where those limits serve that objective.

[1125]

Despite this very clear direction from the Supreme Court, B.C. has very few safeguards on the fairness of political speech. B.C. allows political parties to be heavily dependent on financing from entities with no standing in the election, no vote — again, we're talking about corporations and unions — and the result of this is that political viewpoints of those non-voting entities end up dominating B.C.'s political debate.

I'll talk a little here about the appearance of corruption, and these are very serious words in this House. The appearance of corruption is what we should be concerned about as critical — to not be the optics under which we represent the people of B.C. The word "corruption" is usually reserved for situations when a specific donation is tied to an act of government that's in the donor's interest, and this doesn't happen often.

The fact is, as I was alluding to earlier, while there's rarely corruption in the narrow sense of the word, the overall system is corrupted by the financial participation of these interests. For this reason, the U.S. Supreme Court is willing to limit political donations by economic actors to uphold the optics of integrity in the system. Again, I stress the optics of integrity.

Political financing in B.C. is so dominated by these economic interests. Such a high percent of the financing to support our campaigns comes from these economic interests. It has to give huge concern to all the voters of B.C. about the integrity of our system — the perceived integrity of our system. Again, it's perception, and perception, as a lot of us believe, is as important as anything in reality.

I want to talk for a moment here about if it makes any sense for corporations and unions to actually be participating and donating into our system, whether you look at the management and shareholders of corporations or at the management and membership of labour unions. In the former case, fiduciary duty is primary and the need to avoid conflicts of interest, and in the second, with unions and their members, the importance of workplace rights and benefits. Both of those, whether corporate or union, are very different from supporting a political party and supporting the work of that political party.

There's a disconnect here, in that actually representing your shareholders or your members is not a direct benefit through the political system. There's a question as to whether it's appropriate for these organizations to be operating in the political realm when they are accountable to their members and their shareholders, and there are risks and conflicts associated with that.

I want to mention again, as the member for Richmond-Steveston mentioned, third-party election spending. The opposition wants to see third-party election spending limits back in place. We put those limits in place when we were in government, and this Liberal government pulled them apart, dismantled third-party limits on donations. So when this government speaks out with concern about the fact that there was significant third-party spending in this last election, there's a

reason for that, and that's because they removed the limits and let it go wild.

It is important for all of us to get our message out. It is important for us in this sphere to be heard by our constituents, to be out there and present to the voters of B.C. with our voices. However, that does manage to happen across this country. There are five provinces and the federal government that have caps on donations. B.C. has no cap. Those five provinces and the federal government do not have significant challenges getting their message out.

Controls are needed, says the member for Richmond-Steveston, and I couldn't agree more. Controls are needed. Manitoba and Quebec have banned corporate and union donations, and the federal government has seriously limited them. Those are controls. We don't have controls. We're at the bottom of the list for controls. Every province except B.C. and Alberta has direct public financing for candidates to level the playing field.

[1130]

In closing, if B.C. is serious about fairness in its political system, if we're serious about strengthening democracy and representing the people of this province, we will join the other provinces in getting the big money out of politics.

Noting the hour, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move adjournment of this debate to move on to the next.

G. Robertson moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

**Hon. C. Richmond:** I call private member's motion 88, on the order paper.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 88 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

### Motions on Notice

#### TELUS WORKERS LABOUR DISPUTE

**C. Puchmayr:** I rise in this House to debate the motion presented in my name, which reads:

[Be it resolved that this House recognize the impact of the labour dispute between Telus and the TWU on British Columbia's residents, businesses and most significantly the Telus workers and their families.]

I'm pleased to announce that the workers have ratified an agreement. Unfortunately, it was after five years of bargaining and a four-month-long labour dispute. It is understood by this side that Telus is governed under the federal Labour Code, federal legislation, and that we're governed under the provincial Labour Code here on matters that are not transportation and telecommunications.

About half of the 14,000 Telus employees do live in British Columbia. This is why I'm bringing this motion to this House to discuss those impacts, the impacts we've experienced, and where we could possibly go from here to ensure that we don't have these types of disputes in the future.

Out of the thousands of employees that live in British Columbia.... They shop in British Columbia. They bank in British Columbia. Their children play sports in our communities and our rec centres and attend our schools. The parents are active in community with charitable organizations — the Lions, the Rotary. I believe we even have a member on the other side that comes from that background as well — a telecommunications working background. Their wages sustain business, big and small, throughout urban, suburban and rural British Columbia.

Telus has quite an interesting history. It was a partnership between an Alberta telecommunications company.... There was a merger in 1998. I'll just go through a little bit of the history. It's interesting how the Alberta government owned a company and certainly invested assets into that company to develop the infrastructure, to put in the power lines, to put in the telephone lines. Some of these histories go back — I was actually quite surprised when I did research on the history — into the late 1800s, when telecommunications started along rail lines. There was a lot of money invested.

In 1991 the province of Alberta sold their remaining shares of Telus to private enterprise for \$870 million. In 1992 they started North America's first digital cellular phone network. In 1995 Telus acquired Ed Tel from the city of Edmonton for \$467 million. In 1995 consumer Internet service was launched. Certainly, that generated incredible profits, as we all recall, back in the dot-com, or dot-con, days, when people were investing in electronics all over North America. In 1996 the Telus master brand was introduced, bringing the products and companies under one identity with Ed Tel and AGT brands.

[1135]

In 1998 Telus Corp. and B.C. Telecom announced a proposed merger. This was the first step towards creating the new leading national telecommunications company. So it has quite a history, starting its roots, of course, in government who, in those days, built infrastructure for many of our industries, including our railroad. There were private attempts at B.C. Rail, and certainly with having to overcome some of the obstacles, it was better off for governments to be involved to be able to sustain the costs of building these infrastructures. Eventually these infrastructures have become privatized, and it's when they become privatized and they're launched on a global investment market that you start to see some of the race to the bottom, where there needs to be more profit and usually at the expense of working people. I will continue on in that vein.

We need to look at the impacts of these global competitors on our economy and our society. We certainly understand that the jurisdiction isn't a provincial

jurisdiction, but the impacts are very provincial in nature. We need to do more to ensure that in matters such as this that fall under federal Labour Code, the province ensures or lobbies our counterparts in Ottawa to be more active towards effecting a mutual resolve to these disputes.

Certainly, in British Columbia we have section 68 of the Labour Code, which prevents replacement workers. That isn't the case federally, and as we have seen in numerous labour disputes, it creates incredible violence on the picket lines. We have seen some fatalities in the meat industry and the violence on the picket lines — arrests on both sides of the dispute. Those are generated from the fact that replacement workers are allowed, and it's sort of a disincentive for two parties to sit down and come to a mutual agreement.

There are pressures to cross the picket lines. They divide families. They divide community. Unfortunately, they cause injury, and in some cases, they cause deaths. Allowing strikebreakers to cross picket lines takes away an urgency to bargain in good faith, and we've seen that here — a four-month strike.

You know, it's proven in this province that most negotiations are resolved mutually without disputes. They're done so by two parties sitting down across from each other and coming to a resolve — one that is acceptable by both sides, one that results in a healthy, respectful collective agreement, one that creates a positive relationship between the employer and the employees. We all benefit from these types of negotiations. We benefit because our communities employ people; people in those communities spend money. It creates health while it creates wealth in our communities.

What was this dispute about? There certainly was a partial victory. This dispute was about contracting out. That was the prime issue of Telus jobs going overseas at the sacrifice of our economy, and that was the primary issue that I heard when I went to the picket lines and spoke to striking workers. They wanted to save those jobs, keep them in British Columbia. There was a partial victory. There was some dismantling of that security, but there was a partial victory, and it took five years of bargaining and four months of striking to get there. But the partial victory is good for our economy.

We're living in a new economy, unfortunately — an economy that is driven by profit. Some call it greed; some call it a necessary generator of wealth. Pension plans rely on it, investment capital brokers rely on it, venture capital brokers rely on it and shareholders demand it. We shouldn't be ashamed of it. Most people do benefit from it. But when is it excessive, and what are the consequences that we are prepared to suffer for the lust of profit?

[1140]

We have seen a deregulation of protective laws and regulations in this province. In order to encourage more investment in our province, we need to look no further than our forest industry to see the deregulation and the effect that has had on workers: 38 deaths, and another one over the weekend — almost twice what it

was last year — and it can clearly be linked to deregulation.

As a result of deregulation, which effects more profit for large companies, we pay the price. We have seen deregulation in our labour laws so that now children as young as 12 years old can work in this province virtually unregulated. At one time the labour standards branch would be involved — virtually unregulated now. Yes, the drive for investment and profit comes with dire consequences. We need to analyze our failures to our workers as we gloat over the profits of our investments, and I think that's very important. We need to have a balance.

I read a few weeks ago with interest about a strike at a Maple Ridge farm where Mexican farmworkers went on strike — Mexican farmworkers who were brought up by contract to work at a farm in Maple Ridge. It wasn't a unionized farm. They weren't unionized workers, but they went on strike. They went on strike because of their working conditions and living conditions. They were living in construction trailers. They were cooking outside. They were working ten hours a day, at about \$2.50 an hour.

They went on strike and asked their contractors to allow them to break their contracts and go home, back to Mexico, where the working conditions were better than the working conditions here. Think about that. Mexican farmworkers going on strike in British Columbia so they can go back to Mexico, where the working conditions are better. If that isn't a wake-up call on where we're heading with labour laws in this province.... That is a wake-up call, in my opinion.

Federal and provincial governments need to start representing workers and working conditions as well as working towards the preservation of good-paying jobs in our communities. Telus is just another example of a company responding to the investment community at the sacrifice of its employees and at the sacrifice of our communities. These employees are our citizens. This dispute has had costs on our economy. It has had costs in construction delays, it has had costs on municipal permits, and it has had impacts on small business, all through the attempt to create profit by contracting services to offshore countries. At what cost? The cost is to our communities.

I was saddened to see arrests on the Telus picket lines. It's time that the consequences and the social costs of deregulation, contracting out and exporting decent jobs becomes a component of the debate when we discuss this new economy. The race to the bottom should not be one that we compete in. We have one of the wealthiest resource generators in the world, this province. Let's ensure that all British Columbians share the wealth that is generated, and not just an elite few. This can only be achieved through the cooperation between governments at all levels, between working people in this province, and between a new vision for a society that keeps everyone together, leaves no one behind.

**R. Hawes:** I rise to speak to this motion that, frankly, I don't have any problem supporting, really,

because it is to recognize the hardships of a strike on the workers, on businesses, on everyone associated. The only thing that's missing is the hardship that's also caused for the company that also is a party to the strike.

The Telus strike is over, so I'd rather just speak in generalities. Any labour strike is hard on the people who are involved in it. I don't think there's a worker anywhere who says, "Boy, I can't wait to get out and go on strike," and I can't think of a company that says: "Boy, I sure hope my people will go on strike and close my business down." This is hard on everyone.

[1145]

The Telus dispute and many that happen within the private sector are private-sector disputes. There are always two sides. No one in this House is in the bargaining room. No one sits in the boardroom. No one sits in the union headquarters to see who is right, who is wrong or what the proper way is to settle the strike. It's a matter that's between two parties. A private company strike is not a matter for the government to intervene in, unless there is a threat to the people of the province through a withdrawal of essential service that really causes unsafe conditions for the public.

I listened carefully to what the member spoke about. Really, he speaks to a philosophy that I think clearly differentiates the two parties that sit in this House. We are a free enterprise government. The B.C. Liberal Party stands for free enterprise. We happen to believe that the generation of profit and the reinvestment of that profit is what generates an economy that generates jobs and wealth for all individuals.

**K. Krueger:** It's working.

**R. Hawes:** It is working. Our economy is now working at hyperspeed. We're having difficulty finding skilled people. We can't find employees in this province to fill the thousands of jobs that are out there in this white-hot economy. A lot of that is a result of the kinds of policies we have put in place as a government to ensure that business can operate in an arena that is fair and considerate of their needs to earn a profit but that is also is considerate and fair to the employees that are so vital to making those businesses operate.

But to take the dispute with Telus and somehow twist that into some diatribe all about being unfair to workers is, I think, very disingenuous. We live in a global economy, and the faster that everyone realizes this is a global economy in which we must be competitive, the better it will be for all of us.

We cannot compete, be successful, have a strong economy and move ahead if we are not globally competitive. All of the statements made by that member would speak to us somehow not being globally competitive. He believes that the profit motivation is somehow stripping everyone of their rights and that we should step back from that and earn less profit — as he called it, "excess profit."

Really, what we're talking about here is efficiency. We're talking about being able to compete with the

United States, with Mexico, with countries all around the world. We're not going to compete with Mexico and places where there's cheap labour. We're going to compete on a high-tech basis, because we have highly skilled people that can deliver the goods and services that other countries want around the world, globally, and we can do it better than they can. That's where the high-paying jobs are. That's where we're moving.

I listened to the member speak about 12-year-olds — that somehow we've relaxed labour laws for 12-year-olds. I want you to think about this. Prior to a change that we made in legislation, any child between the age of 12 and 15 that wanted to work part-time, that wanted a paper route or that wanted to work in their mom and dad's corner store, had to get permission from a bureaucrat in Victoria. Now, I want to ask how many parents out there actually went to Victoria and said: "My 13-year-old son would like a paper route. I would like your permission"? I can tell you it never happened.

That was the way the law was, but we recognized that was not really, in reality, what's happening. Nobody is doing this. So we said that a child between 12 and 15, in order to work part-time in this province, should have the permission of his parents. The employer who's employing that child needs to have, on file, a letter from the parents evidencing that there is parental consent. We think that the parents in this country are better to judge whether or not their child should work than some bureaucrat sitting in Victoria. That highlights the difference between our two parties.

[1150]

We don't think that interventionism from Victoria — telling families how to conduct their business and telling businesses how to run — is the proper way to run a province. We think less government and more allowing people to make choices is better. We think that lower taxes and allowing people to make choices with the funds that they earn is the right way to run a province. That's what's rebuilt our economy — the belief that we have a free enterprise system that works best with less government intervention.

I think the evidence is clear. People are coming home from Alberta and Washington State and all the places they escaped to, to escape an oppressionist government that we saw here during the 90s, which believed that profit was a sin. They're back, and they're back in huge numbers. Woe betide us, as a people in this province, if the day should ever come that we return to the philosophy that's espoused by the members opposite. That's the day those businesses will again escape in huge, huge numbers.

I was a banker in the Yukon in the early 1970s when the NDP formed a government under Dave Barrett. What I saw there was a massive influx of money — a huge influx of money from British Columbia in the mining sector. That investment was fleeing this province to go to the Yukon. When the government changed, when the people of this province saw the light, saw the danger in electing that kind of government and re-elected a free enterprise government, that money left the Yukon and returned here quickly.

Profit means jobs. Jobs mean more taxes for the government; they mean better services that the government can provide. So while I look at the member's motion, I don't have a problem with it. I feel sorry for those in Telus that were on strike. I understand the hardships. I have friends who work for Telus, who suffered through this ordeal. I know that they say they're not better off. In fact, I know no one who is engaged in a strike at any time that says after the strike: "I'm much better off. Having sacrificed months of pay, I'm way better off today." That doesn't happen.

While I don't have a problem with this motion and I do empathize, I do find a huge objection to the kinds of statements the member opposite made. I don't mind voting in favour of the motion because, frankly, it's for me just recognizing the hardships that people endured in a strike. Thanks for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

**N. Simons:** I think I have one and a half minutes until our stomachs will remind us of other priorities. I do want to rise in support of the motion of my hon. friend the member for New Westminster: be it resolved that this House recognize the impact of the labour dispute at Telus and the TWU on British Columbia residents, businesses and most significantly the families affected by this lockout.

I do so because of the direct and obvious impacts that exist in my communities, the ones that I represent in Powell River–Sunshine Coast. Families have been disrupted. Families have suffered immensely in the last four months since they were locked out after refusing to accept the conditions of an imposed contract, none of which I've heard the member for Maple Ridge–Mission mention in his glorious tribute to the beauty of free enterprise.

I think this is really a case of ignoring the facts that are before us and ignoring the issues before us, which is the impact on families that inappropriate contract impositions have had on them. I'll just point to the fact that families require, families deserve and communities deserve jobs in their communities where a living wage

is paid — a wage that will support the purchase of a home, the wage that will support the raising of a family, the wage that will support the consumers in restaurants and in shops in those communities. This is what this issue is about. The issue is about the possibility and the fear that we all share of important and relevant and valuable jobs being shipped off to countries that have no accountability to us or to the consumers here. That is at the base of this motion being put forward by the member for New Westminster.

[1155]

I believe that after five years of negotiation.... I met some people in my travels who worked for Telus five years ago when the contract negotiations began, and they maybe retired four years ago and are sitting with their brothers and sisters on the lines in the rain and in the cold to make a point — to remind people of this province how important it is to stand up for rights, how important it is to recognize that the situation they're in is unjust.

I have immense respect for all of those who stood strongly on the picket lines, saying: "No, we will not allow the jobs of today and the jobs for our children of tomorrow to be shipped off to somewhere else." This is an issue about maintaining a healthy economy here. It has nothing to do with being a banker in the Yukon; it has to do with being a Telus worker in British Columbia.

Noting the hour, on another point, I move adjournment of the debate.

N. Simons moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Richmond moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

**Mr. Speaker:** This House stands adjourned until two o'clock this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 11:57 a.m.

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