



Fifth Session, 38th Parliament

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**DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**
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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
His Honour the Honourable Steven L. Point, OBC

FIFTH SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2009

The House met at 1:37 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Introductions by Members

C. James: I have a couple of guests to introduce who are in the Legislature with us today. The first are actually constituents of the member for Cariboo South, but they are relatives as well.

I'm pleased to introduce my aunt and uncle, Ed and Bonnie Gerow, who are visiting from Williams Lake. I'd also like to welcome a surprise today in the Legislature, who I didn't expect to see, who's coming perhaps to check up on me — the love of my life, my husband, Albert Gerow.

Statements

RECOGNITION OF WORK OF RETIRING MLAs

C. James: As today may be the last day of the Legislature, I would like, on behalf of the official opposition, to thank all the members in this chamber for their commitment to British Columbia and the work that they've given to the people of this province — particularly to those members who are moving on and retiring. On all our behalf, I'd like to say thank you for your commitment to the people of British Columbia.

Introductions by Members

N. Macdonald: It's my pleasure to introduce an intern who is from Invermere, James Bagan. With him is Reverend John Cyler, who used to live in Windermere and is James's father-in-law. I'd like you all to join me in making them welcome.

Statements

RECOGNITION OF WORK OF RETIRING MLAs

Hon. S. Bond: We, too, on this side of the House want to say what an absolute pleasure it has been to serve in this place for the last number of years. But we especially today want to recognize members who are making the voluntary decision not to be returning to this place. There are other circumstances that we will face over the next number of weeks.

Interjections.

Hon. S. Bond: Several of them are celebrating at the moment.

This is an incredible honour for anyone who has chosen to represent whatever part of the province they live in. On behalf of the government side of the House, we want to extend our thanks for all of the hard work that MLAs do every single day and especially to thank the members who have served so well and have now chosen to move on to another path in their life.

On behalf of the government, thank you and good luck as you move on.

[1340]

Introductions by Members

J. Horgan: I have two guests in the precinct today. The first one is Mark Freeman, who has the difficult task of being the door guy in the NDP caucus, which means he deals with everything that comes through the door. As members on both sides of the House know, you just never know what you're going to get. Life is a box of chocolates to Mark. Would the House please make him welcome.

I have a very, very special guest, although he's fallen short of the mark a couple of times. When he walked from India to Mount Everest, he only got to 8,000 metres. He didn't make it the last 800 metres because they weren't using oxygen.

So he came back to Vancouver Island, his home, and in 2006 only swam three-quarters of the way around the Island. It wasn't until the next year that he was able to get into the water and swim all the way around Vancouver Island to raise money for the Red Cross and drowning awareness.

He's here today to meet with the Minister of Healthy Living and Sport. Would everyone please welcome a very extraordinary man, Rob Dyke.

Tributes

CHRIS TRUMPY

Hon. C. Hansen: I would like to ask the House to join me in thanking an incredible public servant who has served this province so ably over the last several decades and for whom today is his last day as an employee of the provincial government. While I am sure that he will continue to serve the province of British Columbia in other capacities in the future, he is certainly somebody that has dedicated his life to public service, and I know he will continue to do that.

I hope that everybody in this House will show our appreciation to an outstanding public servant, Chris Trumpy.

Introductions by Members

J. Brar: Up in the gallery I see a friend who has given a lot of support to me, Deborah Payment. She is with

some other friends of hers. I would like to ask the House to make her and her friends feel welcome.

D. Thorne: Today I'd like to welcome Joyce Barrett Gudaitis to the Legislature. Her son is an intern here this year, and she is from the Tri-Cities. She has lived in my riding for quite a long time. She's also the board chair of the Step-by-Step Society, of which I'm going to speak a little later. I'd like us all to make her very welcome.

R. Austin: I'd like all members of the House to join me in celebrating a special day today for someone on this side of the House. As all members know, politics sometimes ages one a little bit prematurely. Four years ago a member of our caucus got elected at the ripe age of 41, and today I'm happy to announce that the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke is celebrating his 50th birthday.

K. Conroy: I'd like to rise in the House today to introduce a number of women that are here. One of them, who a member has already introduced, is Deborah Payment, who is a business agent for the Compensation Employees Union. With her are Sheila Moir, director of health and safety at the B.C. Federation of Labour, and Michelle Laurie, president of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

Today they are here also representing the Public Compensation Coalition. Could the House please join me in making them welcome.

C. Trevena: Joining us in the gallery today are students from Huband Park Elementary School in Courtenay. There are 51 grade 5 students who are going to be joining us today. The first half should be in the gallery now, and the second half will be coming in later this afternoon. They're joined by their teachers, Valerie Sherriff and Brad Fraser, along with parents Mrs. Harvey, Mrs. Lowe, Mr. Burechailo and Mrs. Janzen. I hope the House will make them all very welcome.

N. Simons: I'd just like to bring the attention of this House to a young man named Taylen from Powell River, who is eight years old and has been growing his hair in order to raise money for cancer. He found out his grandpa got cancer, and he's doing his part. He's so far raised \$485. They're having a penny drive up at Henderson School there. I just want to recognize him for the hard work he's doing, and on behalf of all of the House, I would like to thank him.

[1345]

C. Evans: The member for Nanaimo and I just got to go to the 80th birthday party of Barbara Barrett. She's the woman wearing the bright red dress at the very back over there. Barbara has visited us here for 20 years that I know of, and Barb used to sit on the other side when we

sat on the other side. Would all of you, everybody, make Barbara welcome.

Barb, next time you come, ask for a seat over there.

M. Karagianis: Today also joining us in the gallery are two legislative assistants: my legislative assistant Teresa Scambler, who often watches question period on TV but today decided to join us and watch it for real, and Heidi Reid. Both of them are exceptional support staff for us. I'd like the House to make them welcome.

G. Gentner: I see just walking through the doors up in the gallery two CAs of mine, Sheryl Seale, and for the first time in the House, I'd like to introduce Lorinder Birak. She was a former host for Red FM. Would the House please make them welcome.

Statements

RECOGNITION OF WORK OF RETIRING MLAs

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I'm going to take the Speaker's prerogative of listing the people that are voluntarily choosing to retire, who won't be here when we come back: Tom Christensen, David Chudnovsky, David Cubberley, Corky Evans, Sindi Hawkins, Al Horning, Olga Ilich, Dan Jarvis, Dennis MacKay, Chuck Puchmayr, Claude Richmond, Val Roddick, Rick Thorpe and Katherine Whittred. I think all British Columbians should give them a very warm welcome. [Applause.]

These members have done an outstanding job for all British Columbians. I think that everybody appreciates what they've done. I know that both the Deputy Premier and the opposition leader have commented on them, but this being our last day, I want to thank them personally for a job well done.

Statements (Standing Order 25b)

JOYCE WILBY

C. Trevena: I'd like to tell the House about Joyce Wilby. She's the librarian at Alert Bay's public library and has been for the last 50 years.

Mrs. Wilby helped to start the library, which is in a storefront building on the waterfront of the village, and she has been there ever since. She told me: "I guess I just didn't know when to stop. It was much better before TV and was very busy for the first 20 years." The library started small, only opening ten hours a week to start with, and it grew as the community grew and now continues, even though Alert Bay has been going through some tough economic times these last few years.

While its focus has changed a little over the last half century, it's still a very well used public resource. There are fewer reference books, but there are public access computers. Mrs. Wilby says that people know what they want to read, whether they've heard about a book on *Oprah* or read a book review of it.

The library is unique in that it houses a museum and archives, and because of that it maintained its independence from the Vancouver Island Regional Library network. But it has now joined a federation of other independent libraries on the coast, with Powell River, Saltspring and Victoria, which will help when it comes to staff training and book purchasing. It will also mean that the library will become computerized, for up until now the community library has relied on the tried-and-true method of library cards.

[1350]

Mrs. Wilby, who moved to Cormorant Island and Alert Bay with her husband when she was 22, has two clerks working with her, but as creator and custodian is the very modest centre of this library. She is also the community's director for vital statistics and the marriage commissioner. But it's her love of books and of reading that keeps her continually engaged and committed to the library, museum and archives of Alert Bay.

CANCER SOCIETY DAFFODIL MONTH

H. Bloy: As you all know, April is Canadian Cancer Society's Daffodil Month all across Canada. This month thousands of Canadian Cancer Society volunteers will be knocking on doors across Canada, including British Columbia. They will be providing reliable information about that terrible disease, asking for your help in making history.

Cancer is made up of over 200 different diseases. In fact, two in five Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. My daughter Candice lost both of her parents to cancer. It is a disease that can affect anyone, and I know firsthand the profound effect it has on families and their loved ones.

This past summer my colleague from Malahat–Juan de Fuca and myself were diagnosed with bladder cancer, but we have received the good news that we're cancer-free. We're still taking treatment, but we're cancer-free.

Here in British Columbia we are pleased to work with the Canadian Cancer Society, B.C. and Yukon Division, as one of our partners to prevent and manage cancer as well as to support those living with it. Our emphasis on preventative strategies such as tobacco reduction, increased physical activity and healthier diets is working.

The largest supplier of daffodils for North America is Vantreight Farms right here on Vancouver Island. This bright yellow daffodil is the Canadian Cancer Society's symbol of hope. When the Canadian Cancer Society volunteer comes to your door, please give generously.

Your donations contribute directly to the fight against cancer in British Columbia.

On a personal note, cancer doesn't recognize what side of the aisle a member is sitting on. I wish the members who are presently battling cancer all the best during their treatment and a speedy recovery. Together we can make cancer a thing of the past.

INLAND LAKE PARK

R. Fleming: In the Powell River area there's an incredible tourism and recreation area that is world-renowned. It's located in a semi-remote forest setting. The Inland Lake Provincial Park and trail system is less than a ten-minute drive north of the city of Powell River.

Inland Lake provides excellent camping, fishing, boating and outdoors-oriented activities. In light of your announcement about retiring MLAs and others, Mr. Speaker, I know that members of this House will be especially pleased to know that paid overnight camping this year begins on May 12 and runs through September 30 at Inland Lake Park.

What makes this park so special for B.C. and a destination for travellers from the U.K., Germany, the United States, Australia, Japan and elsewhere is not its tranquility. It's not the natural beauty of the park or even the excellent fishing. It is, in fact, the park's unique status and innovative trail and facility design that is 100 per cent wheelchair-accessible.

Construction of Inland Lake's fully accessible circuit trail began in the mid-1980s as part of a legacy and tribute to Rick Hansen's incredible Man in Motion world tour for spinal cord research. In 1989 the park received a Premier's Award for excellence in accessible design, but some 20 years later the provincial park has fallen into disrepair from deferred maintenance.

Last year a number of determined local people in Powell River sought opportunities to utilize federal funds to employ out-of-work forest workers. To date, the Inland Lake trail refurbishment project has been a successful recipient and hopes to have support through all three phases needed for completion to rebuild this remarkable tourism asset.

People like David Morris, executive director of the model community project, and Kathleen Richards, who is the head trail-builder, were instrumental in making this happen. They worked with local government, with B.C. Parks, with disabled people and the economic development agency to build support and get momentum.

The MLA for Powell River–Sunshine Coast was also instrumental in getting support for this project, and we look forward to its completion.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY IN B.C.

V. Roddick: In these times of recession, agriculture continues to forge ahead. It not only feeds us; it

is a leading innovator in protecting our environment. Agriculture has changed dramatically thanks to research and the role it plays in our economy and in our lives — for example, specifically bred vegetables that maximize natural disease prevention, soybeans that can be processed into everything from milk substitutes to auto upholstery, power generation, anaerobic digesters.

[1355]

Farmers, especially young farmers such as the one my colleague from Cariboo South and I addressed last Saturday night, understand the increasingly important role that they play countrywide.

Our Fraser Valley farms are more than three times as cash productive as any area in Canada. Abbotsford is the hub, with Delta South also being an important contributor in agribusiness as well as being home to the largest vegetable producer in British Columbia.

Over the past ten years Delta's annual gross receipts have gone from \$65 million to \$190½ million, wages from \$13 million to \$34 million. Our irrigated land has virtually doubled from 4,000 to 8,000 acres and will increase substantially again with the application of 18 million in mitigation dollars from the South Fraser perimeter road.

We have daughters entering all areas of the industry, adding fresh, beautiful faces and brilliant minds to a one-time male-dominated profession. We need clean air, clean water and ample food because we all still have to eat to live.

STEP-BY-STEP CHILD DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

D. Thorne: Today I'd like to tell the House about the Step-by-Step Child Development Society, which has been operating a high-quality, inclusive child care pre-school centre in the Tri-Cities since 1979.

The early intervention services provided by this valued community society are legion: parent-and-tot drop-ins with early childhood educators at two different locations, Harbour View School in Coquitlam and Old Orchard Hall in Port Moody; the family resource program, which presents workshops on topics such as behaviours that are challenging, nutrition and play ideas. The specialized equipment and toy-lending library enable all families to provide enrichment and stimulation, regardless of economic circumstances.

Especially valuable is the summer program for children who are on waiting lists for diagnosis or therapy and are due to start school in the fall. The week that these children spend at the skills enhancement camp enables them to be ready for that all-important first day at school, a day most of us never forget. Parents also learn how to support the skill development of their children during this time.

In spite of increasing difficulties with their funding, Step-by-Step has recently managed to open an after-school activity centre geared to middle-school students

so that they can spend time giving back to the community while socializing and having fun. Step-by-Step has been working hard in the Tri-Cities community for 30 years, supporting families with unmet needs, and they deserve the House's thanks.

MESSAGE FOR INCOMING MLAs

C. Richmond: As today is the last chance I will have to speak in this House, I would like to take a couple of minutes to talk about the STV. No. How did that get in there? [Laughter.]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk about the House — this House — and its importance. These are just some of my observations from my years in this place. Very few people have been elected to sit in this chamber, and those who have been must always treat it with respect bordering on reverence. There are 800 years of history behind it, and it is what makes democracy work. As Churchill said: "Democracy is the worst form of government there is, except for all the rest."

This House can be frustrating, but it can also be uplifting. It can be a source of inspiration and a source of fear. Ask any cabinet minister who is being grilled in question period. All who sit in this House are equal, and only the people who put you here can remove you from this place. They are the ones who voted to send you here, something which you forget at your peril.

[1400]

I have been fortunate to have been here for quite a while in several different capacities. It's been a great trip, and I'm glad that I made it. I have learned a lot. I have learned from those who are skilled orators, and I have learned from those who are less endowed with that skill. I have learned what to do from those who have been here much longer than I, and I have learned what not to do from others.

I would say to new members: when you come through these doors and bow towards the Chair, you are recognizing hundreds of years of tradition and showing your respect for this chamber and for those who have gone before you.

Try not to lose the feeling you had the first time you entered this place. No matter how heated the debate, always treat each other with respect. Speak as though your mother were watching.

We have many books of precedents and rules to guide us and our conduct in this place. The best is probably MacMinn's *Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia*, which we should all open more often and have a look at. We have these publications to guide us on how we conduct ourselves in a respectful manner. There is nothing, though, that says you can't have a little fun while you're here. Humour is a valuable thing to have, and it can take the sharp edge off a debate, which is usually a good thing.

I wish to thank all of the people who make this House function: the Clerks, the Sergeant-at-Arms staff, the pages and all our support staff. I thank you for a wonderful 19 years. [Applause.]

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP WITH PATRICK KINSELLA

C. James: My question is to the Minister of Energy responsible for B.C. Hydro. Could the minister tell this House what influence Mr. Kinsella applied on behalf of Accenture to secure the privatization of one-third of B.C. Hydro — a deal that was worth \$1.45 billion to Mr. Kinsella's client?

Hon. W. Oppal: I'm not going to answer the question, because Mr. Kinsella's name is before the Supreme Court.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition has a supplemental.

C. James: Silence speaks volumes. Silence speaks volumes about this government. These are legitimate questions, and the government continues to hide behind excuse after excuse after excuse.

I'd like to quote from Mr. Kinsella's own resumé. "In 2003 Accenture Business Services approached the Progressive Group to assist in identifying business opportunities with the province of B.C. The Progressive Group interviewed a number of stakeholders in British Columbia across government and Crown corporations and determined that the best opportunity for Accenture was B.C. Hydro." Here's how that ended up: Accenture got a deal worth \$1.45 billion, and B.C. taxpayers paid the price.

Again my question is to the minister. Can the minister confirm Mr. Kinsella's role in selling off a third of B.C. Hydro? How were the Premier and his office involved, and what's the real story behind the sell-off of B.C. Hydro?

Hon. W. Oppal: I will not answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition has a further supplemental.

C. James: It's just not good enough. The B.C. Liberal campaign chair brags about his influence with this government. He gets his clients a privatization deal worth \$1.45 billion, and the only response this government gives is that it's before the courts. That's just not good enough. The minister knows it, the government knows it, and the Premier knows it.

Again to the minister: there's only one way to clear the air. Tell the people of British Columbia the truth. Tell

them what this government did to support Mr. Kinsella and his client in gaining access to \$1.45 billion and a piece of B.C. Hydro.

[1405]

Hon. W. Oppal: If Mr. Kinsella or anyone else has conducted himself in an inappropriate manner, then that matter ought to be reported to the appropriate authorities.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

L. Krog: Perhaps the members opposite have forgotten the Premier's promise, made in this House on many occasions, that there would be full disclosure of government documents relating to the B.C. Rail corruption case. Today we learn that B.C. Rail is withholding over 80 documents that Justice Bennett has ruled relevant — documents that may answer questions that all British Columbians have.

What involvement did Mr. Kinsella have in arranging the B.C. Rail privatization deal? Who did he meet with? What was the involvement of the Premier's office? What did the Premier do to help CN to save the deal in the spring of 2004?

My question is to the Minister of Transportation responsible for B.C. Rail. Will he today tell B.C. Rail to release all the documents it has that are relevant as declared by Justice Bennett in the Supreme Court of British Columbia?

Hon. W. Oppal: I'm sure that member knows by his...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. W. Oppal: ...frequent visits to the courtroom that the prosecution is being conducted by a special prosecutor.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

L. Krog: This is astounding. On the one hand, the government claims they can't answer questions out of respect for the courts, and on the other hand, they have hired guns in court withholding documents that are relevant to the case. There's a term for that. It's "cover-up."

There are documents ordered relevant, and the government refuses to release them. They continuously refuse to answer relevant questions in this chamber that are not before the courts.

My question again is to the Minister of Transportation responsible for B.C. Rail. Is he going to do the right thing today, live up to his Premier's promise and order that all the relevant documents be disclosed now?

Hon. W. Oppal: That is an absolutely shameful statement to make in light of the fact the special prosecutor is appointed under the act, under very strict circumstances, by the assistant deputy minister.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members.

B. Ralston: The Attorney General's answers over recent weeks seem to suggest that anything to do with Mr. Kinsella is before the courts. Yet Mr. Kinsella's own resumé said that he interviewed a number of stakeholders in the government and "determined that the best opportunity for Accenture was B.C. Hydro." So the Premier's closest friend and former campaign manager was working for Accenture. The company then won a lucrative deal that privatized one-third of B.C. Hydro.

What role did the Premier's office and Mr. Kinsella play in this \$1.45 billion deal? Surely the public of British Columbia is entitled to know the answer to that question.

Hon. W. Oppal: The conduct of Patrick Kinsella is, no doubt, being examined by and will continue to be examined by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. I'm not going to comment on any of those matters.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

B. Ralston: The Attorney General has completely failed to draw any connection between Mr. Kinsella and the Accenture deal and the matter before the court — completely failed.

[1410]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

B. Ralston: Doesn't he think that the public has a right to know what role Mr. Kinsella and the Premier's office played in the sale of B.C. Hydro to Accenture?

Hon. W. Oppal: Well, if there was any doubt about any connection between Patrick Kinsella and B.C. Rail, the members opposite have made that link.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Continue, Attorney.

Hon. W. Oppal: The members opposite have connected Mr. Kinsella to the trial.

R. Austin: In 2005-2006 Mr. Kinsella was contracted by Alcan to "educate the provincial government on the value of allowing Alcan to increase the size of its smelter operation in Kitimat, B.C."

Education of the provincial government. That led to job losses in Kitimat and a deal so generous for Alcan that the B.C. Utilities Commission had to intervene.

My question is to the Minister of Energy. What role did the Premier and Mr. Kinsella play in securing the Alcan deal?

Hon. W. Oppal: I will not answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

R. Austin: These are the answers we get from a government that puts the shareholders of Alcan ahead of the shareholders of British Columbia. British Columbians have a right to know. Again to the Minister of Energy: how did Mr. Kinsella educate the provincial government, and did that education lead to the Alcan deal and to job losses in Kitimat?

Hon. W. Oppal: If there is a suggestion that Mr. Kinsella has done anything wrong, then that person can take it to the appropriate authorities.

C. Trevena: Plutonic Power has confirmed that Mr. Kinsella has been providing them with "high-level strategic advice on public policy." We also know that in 2006 B.C. Hydro offered Plutonic an energy purchase agreement for its East Toba–Montrose run-of-the-river project.

My question is to the Minister of Energy. What did Mr. Kinsella and the Premier do to ensure that Plutonic Power got the energy purchase agreement?

Hon. W. Oppal: My answer is the same.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

C. Trevena: I've got to say I'm shocked by the contempt that the Attorney General is holding this House in. The people of B.C. know that this isn't before the courts, and they want to have some answers. B.C. Hydro isn't before the courts, and Plutonic isn't before the courts.

I ask again, and I ask the Minister of Energy and Mines: did Mr. Kinsella and the Premier hammer out a lucrative deal for a company that donated more than \$50,000 to the B.C. Liberal Party?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. W. Oppal: It's the individual who is there. It's the individual who is before the Supreme Court and the conduct of that person. If that person is before the court and if he is called as a witness, all of this can be the subject of cross-examination.

[1415]

R. Fleming: The B.C. Supreme Court years ago found that, as a course of daily business practice, the payday lending industry was acting in a criminal manner. For years this government dragged its feet and did nothing about it.

Now documents show that in May 2007 Patrick Kinsella met with the then Solicitor General. A senior vice-president of the Cash Store has since confirmed that Mr. Kinsella was lobbying — his word — the B.C. Liberals and "bringing the Solicitor General up to speed on what our position was with respect to regulation of payday loans in British Columbia."

So to the Solicitor General: tell the people of British Columbia what kind of issues Mr. Kinsella was bringing the government up to speed on. Did he influence the government's legislation on payday lending, and is that why this government's payday regulations are among the weakest in Canada?

Hon. W. Oppal: That statement is absolutely astounding. Obviously, the member opposite has some concrete evidence that would justify the making of that statement. If he does, he should make that statement outside.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Just take your seat for a second, Member.
Continue, Member.

R. Fleming: I didn't ask the question of the Attorney General. But since these questions are about lobbying, maybe it's appropriate that he answers them, because he's the person who has failed to clean up the lobbying industry in British Columbia time after time.

The question is about this government, for the Solicitor General. The claims are that legislation was stalled, that regulations were hollowed out because payday lenders paid this party's campaign chair to represent them to this government.

So again, my question is to the Solicitor General. What exactly was discussed at these meetings? How did that influence government's policy, and how did it influence legislation on payday lending in British Columbia?

Hon. W. Oppal: My answer is the same.

S. Simpson: So far today this government has muzzled the Energy Minister, the Transportation Minister and the Solicitor General, and they've had their excuse-maker, the Attorney General, up here refusing to answer legitimate questions.

The question is simple. As best we know, B.C. Hydro isn't before the courts. As best we know, Mr. Kinsella isn't before the courts. He may be at some time, but he's not today. So the question is this: what was Mr. Kinsella doing for B.C. Hydro and Accenture? Will the Energy Minister finally get up in his place and answer a question on his file?

Hon. W. Oppal: I would respectfully suggest to that member that he should inform himself as to what is going on in the Supreme Court of British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

S. Simpson: What I would suggest to the Attorney General is that he inform himself about what his job in this place is, because he's not doing it.

We are talking about the ultimate Liberal insider.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

S. Simpson: The ultimate Liberal insider — we are talking about his conduct. We are talking about his relationship to the Premier's office and the tape, the stain that is coming up in the Premier's office increasingly every day by Mr. Kinsella's conduct and the lack of answers.

[1420]

If the Attorney General wants to clean this matter up for his Premier, maybe he should try answering questions. He has to answer somewhere. Answer now. What is the relationship of Mr. Kinsella to this government?

Hon. W. Oppal: All of those questions will be answered in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, not in this chamber.

J. Kwan: Accenture, Alcan, Plutonic Power, payday lending industry — all are clients of Patrick Kinsella, friend of the Premier, co-chair of the Liberal Party campaign.

My question to the minister is this: will he get up and tell British Columbians today what exactly happened between Patrick Kinsella and the Premier's office in securing these deals for their friend?

Hon. W. Oppal: The conduct of Patrick Kinsella is before the court. It's been brought before the court. In the event that he testifies, he will no doubt be asked about all of his activities, and he'll be cross-examined on those activities. It's for those reasons that we owe a degree of deference to the court to not get involved in those pieces of evidence.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

J. Kwan: Accenture is not before the courts. Alcan is not before the courts. Plutonic Power is not before the courts. Payday lending industry is not before the courts. So the minister can stop hiding — the notion that the matter is before the courts — and get up and tell British Columbians the truth.

Or is it the case that all the ministers on that side of the House have been lobbied by Patrick Kinsella and that they've all been muzzled — that not one government member can get up and answer these questions and give British Columbians the real, honest truth?

Hon. W. Oppal: The member is quite right. Accenture is not before the courts. [Applause.]

Interjections.

Hon. W. Oppal: B.C. Hydro's not before the courts. No applause. Payday loans are not before the courts, but Mr. Kinsella is.

S. Herbert: It's interesting that the Attorney General confirms that their campaign chair is before the courts. That's disturbing to me.

Yesterday the Attorney General's instruction to the media in a flame-out was that questions related to the ministries would be answered by the ministers responsible, as is normally the course in this House. That's exactly what we're trying to do. But the minister, the Attorney General, keeps ducking the questions. The ministers keep sitting down, and the cover-up continues.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

S. Herbert: Mr. Kinsella's resumé indicates he was retained by California-based Clean Energy to promote the company as a provider of natural gas for transportation. In July 2007 the company won a contract to upgrade TransLink fuelling stations.

So to the Minister of Transportation, following the Attorney General's instructions: what role did Patrick Kinsella play in securing these contracts? Will he tell the public what representations Mr. Kinsella made? Was it an open tendering process?

Hon. W. Oppal: My answer is the same.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

S. Herbert: Same answer — no answer. Shameful answer. I'm disgusted by this. Our people deserve better.

No one's buying this government's line anymore. The stink is reaching to the rafters.

[1425]

Yesterday the Attorney General lectured the media on the interpretation of *sub judice*. As far as I'm aware, neither TransLink nor Clean Energy is before the courts, nor has anyone said that this has a bearing on his interpretation of *sub judice*.

So again to the minister: did Mr. Kinsella meet with him, the Transportation Minister...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

S. Herbert: ...as part of contract discussions? Did those discussions lead to the contract being secured? It's a relevant question. I want a relevant answer.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members.
Just stay seated.

Hon. W. Oppal: In reading from his script, he has obviously forgotten the fact that Mr. Kinsella...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. W. Oppal: He has overlooked a small detail — that Mr. Kinsella's name is before the Supreme Court.

N. Macdonald: Well, Mr. Patrick Kinsella is the Premier's friend. Mr. Patrick Kinsella ran the Premier's 2001 and 2005 campaigns. The Premier's friend's hands are all over some of the worst pieces of public policy in the history of British Columbia.

What we've seen today is some of the most contemptful action by ministers in the history of this Legislature. Direct questions to ministers who have the responsibility to stand up and explain have been purposefully ignored, and instead we get these sorts of answers. There is no clearer example of the contempt and the rot that has set in, in this government — the rot. Here's a question....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members. Members.
Member, I want to advise you to choose your words more carefully, please. Continue.

N. Macdonald: Here is the question that each and every British Columbian is asking: when is the Premier

going to stand and publicly explain Mr. Kinsella's actions? When is that going to happen?

Hon. W. Oppal: I'm not going to venture into any questions or answers relating to the conduct of Mr. Kinsella.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker Members.
Continue, Member.

M. Farnworth: Well, the fig leaf of defence offered up by this Attorney General gets thinner and thinner each day and exposes the full ugliness of this government to the province of British Columbia.

The Attorney General doesn't want to answer a question in this House. He gives answers outside this House that he's not prepared to follow through on, on this side of the House. It's a disgrace what this government is doing for accountability in this Legislature.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Continue, Member.

M. Farnworth: If the Attorney General doesn't want to answer questions about the role of Mr. Kinsella, perhaps he can answer a question about the role of the Premier.

[1430]

Can he tell this House whether the Premier was directly involved in negotiations to save the CN deal? Can he tell this House whether the Premier was involved in the privatization of Accenture and B.C. Hydro? Can he tell this House what role the Premier played in these cases that are now sordid in this province?

Hon. W. Oppal: The CN deal is before the House, hon. Speaker.

J. Horgan: B.C. Hydro, Alcan, Accenture, Plutonic Power, B.C. Rail, B.C. Lotteries corporation, B.C. Buildings Corporation, Liquor Distribution Branch. All integral parts of government, all involving Patrick Kinsella, all involving the Premier's campaign manager in 2001 and 2005.

In 2001 the Premier said he would run the most open and transparent government in the history of B.C. And what do we get after eight years? Silence. Stonewalling by an Attorney General who is mocked and ridiculed. When they start laughing at you, Attorney, it's done.

My question is to the Deputy Premier. Will the Deputy Premier stand in her place and somehow justify the appalling display we've seen for the past 30 minutes

from the Attorney General and be accountable for once to the people of B.C.?

Hon. M. de Jong: Well, what has really been revealed over the past number of weeks is, firstly, a blatant disregard for an important principle. That is the independence of the judiciary. Secondly...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Continue.

Hon. M. de Jong: Secondly, a fixation with a certain individual that I presume will form the basis of the opposition's strategy going forward.

But I'll tell you what we're going to talk about over the next six weeks. We're going to go out, and we're going to talk about new hospitals. We're going to talk about additional funding, new medical schools, new training for nurses.

We're going to talk about new transportation infrastructure, new bridges, new roads. We're going to talk about the jobs that are going to be created for British Columbians. We're going to talk about sound fiscal management, and we're going to say to British Columbians on May 12: you decide the future of British Columbia. It's your decision on May 12.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

[End of question period.]

Tabling Documents

Hon. W. Oppal: I have the honour to present a report...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. W. Oppal: ...of the Crown Proceeding Act for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2008, in accordance with section 15(2) of the act.

Interjections.

Hon. B. Lekstrom: Thank you to the opposition. I have the honour to present the capital project plan report for the Sierra-Yoyo-Desan upgrade project pursuant to the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act.

Hon. M. de Jong: Just before we get into reports and petitions and people having duties that take them else-

where, I am asked by the staff in the chamber to remind all members to clean out the desks, and that is particularly important. On this last day of school, don't forget to clean out your desks.

M. Karagianis: I'd like to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Petitions

M. Karagianis: I have here hundreds of signatures asking the B.C. government to repeal the changes made to the laws for the benefits and compensation for permanently injured workers, because today permanently injured workers are not receiving adequate support, and they will receive no support as seniors.

N. Macdonald: I also present a petition that asks the B.C. government to repeal the changes made to the law about benefits and compensation for permanently injured workers. I again have hundreds of petitions.

[1435]

J. McGinn: I am presenting 3,000 postcards addressed to the Minister of Transportation. These are from post-secondary students from Emily Carr, Douglas College and Vancouver Community College. These students would like to see the U-pass program expanded to their institutions at a fair, affordable and standardized rate.

R. Chouhan: I would like to present a petition with hundreds of signatures asking the B.C. government to repeal the changes made to the law that determines the benefits and compensation for permanently injured workers, because today the permanently injured are not receiving adequate support, and they will not receive any support when they're seniors — retired.

D. Routley: I would like to present a petition with hundreds of signatures again demanding that the government repeal the changes to the benefits for injured and disabled workers.

D. Chudnovsky: I have hundreds of petitions asking the government to repeal the changes made on the law that determines the benefits and compensation for permanently injured workers.

N. Simons: I, too, present a number of names on cards petitioning the government to reconsider their ill-advised move to change the benefits to injured and disabled workers.

D. Routley: I present a petition, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

D. Routley: It's a petition that asks this government to be accountable for the costs of the Olympics.

S. Herbert: I, too, would like to present a petition from constituents and citizens across B.C. calling on the B.C. government to repeal the changes made to the law that determines the benefits and compensation for permanently disabled workers.

Reports from Committees

R. Fleming: I have the honour to present the report of the Select Standing Committee on Public Accounts for the fourth session of the 38th parliament.

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

Motion approved.

Petitions

G. Gentner: I have 125 signatures on a petition to ask the provincial government to repeal the changes made to the law that determines the benefits and compensation for permanently injured workers.

I also have 164 postcards with signatures from the Delta school district teachers calling on the provincial government to allow teachers to teach instead of administering foundation skills assessment.

I have 1,426 signatures on a petition requesting that the long-term care home at Zion Park Manor remain open.

C. Trevena: I, too, have a petition from the Public Compensation Coalition asking that the government repeal changes made to the laws that determine the benefits and compensation that permanently injured workers receive.

H. Bains: I also have hundreds of petitions from the Public Compensation Coalition asking the B.C. government to repeal the changes made to the laws that determine the benefits and compensation that permanently injured workers receive.

K. Conroy: I, too, have a petition, and that makes over 4,000 signatures on this petition from across B.C. — the petition for the Public Compensation Coalition asking the B.C. government to repeal the changes made to the laws that determine the benefits and compensation that permanently injured workers receive.

D. Routley: I seek leave to make an introduction.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Introductions by Members

D. Routley: I would like the House to help me make welcome two friends, both of them heroes of mine: Bill Routley, the former president of Local 180 Steelworkers and the next MLA for Cowichan Valley, and my very dear friend Rick Doman, son of Herb Doman, the lumber giant in this province. Rick himself is a committed British Columbian to the future of the forest industry and the public interest of British Columbia. Help make them welcome.

Orders of the Day

Hon. M. de Jong: I call continued throne speech debate.

Throne Speech Debate (continued)

S. Fraser: I rise today, this last day of the sitting of the Legislature, to speak in response to the throne speech which was delivered February 16, over a month ago.

[1440]

It seems like just yesterday when we had the throne speech and the pomp and ceremony, the Lieutenant-Governor coming into this House and reading the speech. I've always had great respect for the Hon. Steven Point.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

I would submit that this probably was a difficult document to read for the hon. Lieutenant-Governor. I found it difficult to sit through the words....

Deputy Speaker: Member, I would advise you to think carefully about the measure of what you're moving in right now in terms of your remarks and the appropriateness of them within the scope of parliamentary practice.

S. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I'll get right to it. I found the document contemptuous, misleading, inaccurate. I'd like to go further, but noting parliamentary language, I will have to keep it to that.

Page 10: "The government will protect public sector labour agreements but where spending can be reasonably avoided, it will be." Well, this is reminiscent of... Remember Bill 29, when this Premier in another campaign promise — another promise made and broken by this Premier — said that he would respect negotiated contracts and then tore up the HEU contracts? Thousands of workers had their collective agreements destroyed.

I would also note that the Supreme Court found that the Premier had breached the premises in the Charter, tried to strip the rights established in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada for Canadians — rights and freedoms that were fought for and that people died for. The

leader of this province broke a promise and, in so doing, stripped these rights — or attempted to — from thousands and thousands of workers and families in this province.

Then on the eve of an election we have a throne speech that says the government will protect public sector labour agreements. Well, I don't know one British Columbian that would believe those statements. That's what I mean by misleading — one glaring example. This document is full of them.

The fact of the matter is that for all the fluff of the throne speech, what we have seen in reality is a government that has complete contempt for the public interest. That should have been in the throne speech if it were to be accurate. It is not, I would note.

The history of this government and this Premier has been to essentially loot the public interest, loot the common wealth of this province, of the people of British Columbia, and give it away to their friends and insiders who profit, all to the detriment of the people of British Columbia. That's not in the throne speech. It should be, in the interests of accuracy.

I note that on page 9 it says there's going to be a 50 percent rebate on school property taxes for heavy industry users. You got any left? Sixty mills closed under this government, while this government sat as spectators and watched them drop one by one. I would say that the former Finance Minister's statements of this government being spectators while those jobs in those mills were lost were generous, because they were not spectators. They engineered this.

[1445]

Revitalization. I have a hard time saying that. I will go "devitalization" — 2003 forest devitalization. The deregulation that this government, this Premier, brought in; the gutting of union rights; the race to the bottom; the creation of corporate concentration in our forests, on our public lands; and then the removal of all those lands controlled under public tree farm licences, stripped and given, essentially, to donors of the B.C. Liberal Party. That's how policy is made. That's not in the throne speech, and it should be if this speech were to be accurate.

Our cherished Crown assets, some of them mentioned here today in question period earlier — B.C. Rail, B.C. Hydro, B.C. Ferries — privatized or partially privatized. These are institutions that create pride in all British Columbians, have been respected and cherished by all British Columbians, have benefited all British Columbians until this government came in. They sold the common wealth for very little to benefit their friends and insiders, and that's not in this document.

Auditor General report after Auditor General report were all scathing reports of this government's mismanagement of everything. Everything from homelessness, no clear focus.... We had a 385 percent increase in homelessness in the last five years under this government, and the Auditor General lays it at their feet.

The Auditor General said that the province, the government, failed to protect the public interest when it gave away all the land last year to Western Forest Products from the tree farm licences on Vancouver Island. It was déjà vu, because they did that in 2004. At that point they disgraced the Crown by giving away land to then Weyerhaeuser and failing to consult with the Nuu-chah-nulth, with the Hupacasath, with the Tseshaht First Nation.

The Auditor General report on home and community services, the conclusion: "The Ministry of Health Services is not adequately fulfilling its stewardship role in helping to ensure that the home and community care system has the capacity to meet the needs of the population."

We've had a flurry of Auditor General reports in the last couple of years on a variety of topics, and they have all painted this government as not protecting the public interest, not doing the job of government.

It doesn't matter what party, what political stripe. When a throne speech comes out, it should be more than just words. It should identify the public interest as key, and then it should live up to it.

I noted last week on Thursday that the Premier came in here, surprisingly. I thought I was going to be up on Thursday, so I sort of lost a space there. The Premier spent time speaking of first nations, the new relationship and the proposed legislation that we've all read about. I have to note that the new relationship, which was announced four years ago, failed.

The leadership council of this province called the Premier on that last fall. They said that he had to get to the table and make up for the vacuum that was left by not implementing the new relationship. Once the new relationship was announced four years ago, there was no money budgeted for it. There was no understanding from ministers or ministries about how to apply it on the ground.

[1450]

Indeed, *The New Relationship* was not even signed and had no formal status whatsoever. According to the Auditor General, I believe.... A 2006 or 2007 report stated that the so-called new relationship was actually causing confusion within and without the ministries. It was not signed and was not formalized, and it was in that vacuum of leadership that last fall the leadership council confronted the Premier with the failure of that new relationship.

I would suggest that with the spectre of an election coming up, there was a scrambling to try to bring in legislation. I would note that the proof of that would be in the budget, because there was no money, again, to implement any sweeping new legislation. There was no consideration to implement any new legislation.

There were substantive cuts in every ministry, including the Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation, that might be affected by the new legislation. As we all know

from the disaster in Children and Families, when you try to bring in new policies, like this government has, and you cut the budget, as they did with Children and Families.... It was a disaster for children in care in this province. I would submit that once again, we saw the words being brought forward prior to an election with no intent to implement.

I would note that it was in this House, numerous times, that we called on this government to stand up and support the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. That was telling — the fact that this government would not, the Premier would not and the minister did not. The minister shut down the Leader of the Opposition in a motion to even discuss the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. He wouldn't even talk about it.

While the discussion paper was out on the new legislation.... That discussion paper referred to the Chilcotin decision. Fifteen years in the court — the Chilcotin were that dedicated. That much perseverance kept them in the court for 15 years in an attempt to prove title and rights issues.

While the discussion paper on the new legislation was being passed out, this government, if I'm not mistaken, was going to court. They were going to appeal that decision — another hypocrisy when it comes to the new relationship or, I would submit, this proposed legislation. It contradicted the spirit and intent of the discussion paper. The Premier in his speech spoke of: "We can follow a path of litigation and confrontation, or we can follow a path of consultation, mutual understanding, mutual benefit and mutual strength...."

Well, those are great words, but what's happened is the path of litigation. The last time I counted, I think there were over a hundred cases before the court — litigation, first nations forced to use the court systems often to the detriment of first nations, who can little afford to take on this government in court.

But we have words from the Premier that say we have to get out of that endless cycle of litigation. Four years ago in the new relationship he said the same thing. That precipitated over a hundred court cases.

In the *Times Colonist* last week, the Tseycum First Nation: "The band is talking about suing the provincial government." This is dealing with the land that's been used for roads that have defiled burial sites. All that the Tseycum First Nation gets from this government is platitudes. They're being forced to consider litigation because of no respect shown by this government for the Tseycum's history and ancestors and no meaningful help from the government to protect those sites.

[1455]

In Clayoquot Sound the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council. The chiefs have sent letters to this government, the Premier, the minister responsible, because this government is breaking a deal that's been in place since the early '90s — the interim measures extension agreement.

The Clayoquot Sound central region board is an integral part of the management of the traditional territories of the Nuu-chah-nulth in and around Clayoquot Sound. This government is pulling funding from it. They're breaking a deal.

It says in *The New Relationship* specifically that organizations and mechanisms for first nations, to work with other communities in their regions hand in hand on resource use issues.... We must create those institutions.

But we've got an institution. It's a model to be celebrated all across the province, and the government is pulling from that. Again, there are the words, and then there's the complete contradiction of those words by this Premier and this government.

I would note that there are other examples. We've got the Ministers of Environment and of Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources recently granting an environmental assessment certificate for the Mount Milligan mine project near Prince George. The ministers were aware that the two first nations in the vicinity of the project objected to the certification of the mine because of the failure of this government's botched environmental assessment process.

This government is putting that entire project at risk by ignoring the first nations in the area. The Nak'azdli First Nation has raised the issues around the environmental assessment process, when this government gutted it in 2002, and the McLeod Lake band, if you read the actual environmental assessment.... If the minister would educate himself, he'd see that they had problems right at the last minute and stated so. Clearly, it's stated in the environmental assessment.

Now, if this minister, this government and this Premier ignore first nations in an environmental assessment project, they could be putting this entire project at risk. As we've seen before, this can lead to court cases, and court cases have often caused problems on resource deals. This government and this Premier must know that. Where is the new relationship now?

If that entire project — that mine, the opportunities for 300 full-time jobs — is lost because this government ignored first nations, ignored the spirit and intent of court decisions that have already been rendered in this province, then shame on them. It'll be the people of the Prince George region and the first nations in the area that will suffer because of that lacking by this government and the ministers who signed off on a project that may force first nations to litigate, which would put the brakes very quickly on that project and the opportunities it could bring forward.

I've been told to speak until 3 p.m. I would speak until 3 a.m. if I had a chance. But noting that it's 3 p.m. and being respectful of other members who may want to speak, I would just like to close by saying that I do not support the Speech from the Throne from this government.

R. Lee: I rise today to speak to the Speech from the Throne and what it means for the people of Burnaby.

The Speech from the Throne outlines the government's continued commitment to provide resources, jobs and support for individuals and families in order to help residents through the economic downturn. The Speech from the Throne provides guidance that's backed by the stimulus that Budget 2009 provides.

[1500]

The government is protecting the services individuals and families need most and embracing the diversity of our communities while moving forward into the future. I am proud to be part of this process, which will create jobs and opportunities in Burnaby.

Through the Gateway project and Evergreen line, we are seeing direct investments of over 8,000 jobs. Across British Columbia we will see 90 percent of all the future increase of funding in the budget over three years go towards improving health care. The remaining 10 percent will go towards education and social services. We see this in Burnaby with the new MRI at Burnaby Hospital, for example, school improvements and support for developments like the Royal Canadian Legion's south Burnaby housing facility for seniors.

In Burnaby we're in a good position to move through the economic downturn. We have innovative industries, health care facilities, housing, child programming and education facilities that continue to expand and that service not only our residents but also the whole province.

We look to the Speech from the Throne and see that it's about creating job stability and confidence. It's also about seizing the opportunities we have and expanding on them. The government has committed to protecting social programs, and those include health care, education and housing strategies. In Budget 2009 we saw that previously budgeted health care and education increases will be protected. I have said that almost 90 percent of new spending will go to health care across the province, and Burnaby has received great support through this.

As my colleagues have mentioned in the House already, Burnaby is benefiting from \$4.85 million of investments in the MRI at Burnaby Hospital. Through provincial funding and the Life Can't Wait MRI campaign, residents in Burnaby will have even more services they need. In addition, Burnaby Hospital has seen advancements in the way the emergency room works. A \$2 million investment in the renovation of the Burnaby Hospital was completed in 2008. Now emergency staff can help patients more effectively and efficiently.

Just after the last election people asked me what I would like to do to improve health care in Burnaby. I said that I would like to work on the improvement of emergency room services at Burnaby Hospital. I'm very pleased that I have done that, to keep that prom-

ise, and with the help of the Minister of Health and the Fraser Health Authority, who clearly saw the need for this improvement. In health care we are committed to implementing a new pay-for-performance project in which we watch hospitals that meet predetermined patient care targets.

We reduced the waiting time at Burnaby Hospital. The supertrack and recurrent clinic will see that patients with relatively minor complaints, and rapid assessment soon will be used for expedited assessment, diagnosis and discharge. These programs highlight government's commitment to health care and reducing service wait times.

On health care. I'd also like to mention that I had worked with B.C.'s Qualified Acupuncturists and Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners Association and the Ministry of Health to get acupuncture as a supplementary benefit for Medical Services Plan premium assistance recipients in 2007. This additional service recognized acupuncture treatment as one way of preventing illness and managing existing health conditions and making it easier for patients to assess treatment options that they might otherwise be unable to afford.

[1505]

The government will increase K-to-12 education funding. This includes a raise to the per-pupil funding to over \$8,000, the highest ever in B.C. history. This is in spite of falling school-aged populations.

Education funding includes new schools, upgrading and replacing existing schools and supports to the programs that those schools put on such as plays, art fairs and sports events. This year investments create jobs and build opportunities through stimulating the local economy.

In Burnaby North alone there are three schools slated to receive seismic upgrades: Capitol Hill Elementary, Douglas Road Elementary and also Gilmore Community Elementary. It means that there will also be a brand-new Burnaby Central Secondary School for students in the riding of Burnaby North.

The \$50.6 million project, scheduled to start this year, will be a state-of-the-art school. The new school will be constructed beside the old one, and it will not disrupt classes during construction. The old building will be knocked down after the new one opens in 2011.

More education funding also means other new schools like the one at UniverCity on Burnaby Mountain. Construction of the new school is expected to begin in April 2009 and be completed in 2010. We will also support more than 55 jobs over the life of the project. There will be space for 40 kindergarten and 275 elementary students, with full capacity expected to be reached in 2012.

This province is contributing nearly \$8 million and partnering with Simon Fraser University's SFU Community Trust and the board of education to create this school at the UniverCity development.

In addition to primary and secondary schools, funding for advanced education has increased dramatically.

These new capital investments will create jobs and provide essential upgrades and new space for B.C. colleges and universities, in partnership with the federal government, in programs like the bachelor of nursing and aerospace programs at BCIT and increased funding for research at the SFU medical, technological and pharmacy training.

Overall, the province will see an increase of over \$200 million committed to post-secondary institutions. With BCIT, SFU and UniverCity, Burnaby will benefit greatly from this commitment. These investments open doors for students across Burnaby.

Opportunities are built out of more than education, and we are working to provide opportunities to every resident through the expansion of supportive housing, which works to combat homelessness and shelter and also treat those with mental illness. This is a personalized homelessness strategy, which means shelter for those who need it and also overall community safety and harm reduction.

This includes the Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions, which just celebrated its one-year anniversary. The provincial government provided \$3 million in one-time capital funding, and we will continue to provide \$14 million annually.

This 100-bed facility provides and promotes education, health and medical care and training as well. Patients can receive dual treatment for health and addiction.

In addition to homelessness strategies, Burnaby and the province are working hard to provide affordable housing for individuals and families. As I've mentioned to the House before, the government announced that 162 units at Hillside Gardens will be purchased. These properties, now managed by SUCCESS, are being converted into affordable housing and will provide accessible solutions to Burnaby families and individuals who need them.

[1510]

These projects are in addition to the facilities such as the one at Confederation Park between Alpha and Beta avenues. These buildings, purchased in 2007 and consisting of 38 two-bedroom townhouses, will continue to be upgraded and revitalized to provide much-needed affordable housing for low-income families. The government has committed over the last year to increasing the amount of affordable housing for residents in Burnaby, and I am proud to say that we are meeting this commitment.

In addition to investing in infrastructure, we are investing in people. Eighteen million dollars is being invested for the South Burnaby Royal Canadian Legion No. 33 housing society. This will create a 70-bed facility for seniors in the area. The construction of the facility provides opportunity for local job creation, and it's an important investment in the future of our senior care.

When people are facing economic downturn, they worry about their families and their jobs. The govern-

ment is working not only to protect jobs but also to create them, while investing in the programs that enable families to live happily and healthily together. The investments I spoke about a moment ago — protecting health care, education and housing — protect people and their families and infrastructure investment. We see job investment as well.

Projects like the Evergreen line also create jobs and keep people in B.C. working. The government has provided \$410 million to the construction of the line. That involves the construction of a new 11-kilometre rapid transit line running from Lougheed Town Centre in Burnaby to the Coquitlam town centre via Port Moody.

This investment and development will create 8,000 new direct and indirect jobs. These jobs come now, during the first stage, and throughout, ensuring that people can provide for themselves and their families. The creation of jobs stimulates economic growth and provides for families.

As we move forward, we focus more on innovative stimulus and development. In Burnaby we are home to seven of the largest alternative energy companies in B.C. They contribute greatly to the diversity of the economy in Burnaby, while focusing on the importance of green development. They create a sustainable future through the work they do, but they also provide jobs and economic stimulus.

These industries are leaders in green technology and set the standard for development around North America. These local businesses — such as Ballard Power Systems, Xantrex Technology, Hydrogenics Test Systems and Azure — embody one of the commitments to local development discussed in the Speech from the Throne.

The government is working to develop biodiesel and cellulose ethanol, new moves towards carbon sequestration technology and is expanding other major energy-based programs. These are provincewide, but in Burnaby we house many of those technologies.

There has been \$2 billion worth of infrastructure projects identified in B.C. — projects for the next three years — and it has submitted proposals for nearly 400 projects through the federal government for cost-sharing.

In addition, a further \$10.6 billion in approved capital projects are scheduled for construction in the next three years. In addition, \$1.4 billion worth of local infrastructure programs and projects will also be built. That represents a total of \$14 billion in new and ongoing public capital infrastructure and 88,000 new jobs throughout the province.

[1515]

This benefits residents in Burnaby North directly, with projects like the Gateway program. The Gateway program creates jobs while developing a plan to move people and goods around. It also opens up Burnaby and B.C. to Canada and also to the world.

These developments contribute to our Asia-Pacific gateway and the Asia-Pacific initiative. As a member of

the Burnaby Board of Trade and the Asia-Pacific committee, I know firsthand how important these programs are for promoting trade and investment in Burnaby.

In addition to building prosperity with growing economies in China, India, Japan, Korea and southwest Asia, we are opening five trade offices, including the one already opened in Shanghai. The minister has just opened two offices in China, one in Shanghai and one in Guangzhou. Last year we also opened the Seoul and Tokyo offices. So now we have been planning to open even more offices across Asia.

The Asia-Pacific trade networks serve to maximize the economic benefits by working closely with government partners and the private sector to promote exports and investment potentials. We also continue to be recognized as a leader in North America's capital for Asia-Pacific culture and commerce, innovation, research and development.

I've spoken before in the House about TRIUMF, Canada's laboratory for particle and nuclear physics on the UBC campus. There were over 100 Japanese researchers and students working on experiments with TRIUMF, in collaboration with Osaka University, the University of Tokyo and Toyota Laboratories, to name just a few.

The B.C. government has supported TRIUMF with over \$17 billion since 2001 and continues to provide for their research. There's yet another way that we are building relationships with our partners in Asia and working to promote B.C. around the world. Through our new and expanding relationships, we can promote local industries to the world.

To truly realize our Asia-Pacific initiative advantages, we are developing our transportation networks to move people and goods more effectively and also efficiently. This can only happen, however, with developments to the local structure, and that's what the Gateway project does. The twinning project has had my full support from the beginning, and being a part of this, I know that we have brought jobs, growth and opportunities to Burnaby.

The Gateway project will see over \$3 billion of investment in creating jobs, investing in infrastructure and moving people faster. To be completed in 2013, the Port Mann bridge is a large component of the Gateway program. The expansion of the bridge consists of improved access, which will reduce congestion and decrease travel time. The bridge will also expand our high-occupancy vehicle lane. It will be a new one, and we will also have new bus services.

The project will also provide improved pedestrian and cyclist pathways across the bridge and along the South Fraser perimeter road. Most importantly, construction of the bridge will create 8,000 jobs to keep British Columbians working.

Another important source of support is through the local government infrastructure program, such as the traffic fine revenue-sharing. Burnaby is benefiting by \$2.9 million just from this fine.

In conclusion, as we move forward through this economic downturn, it's clear that Burnaby and its residents are in a great place to recover and move forward. We are working to protect and create jobs as well as protect families and the services they need.

It has been said before. We are fortunate to be in the position we are in with our provincial resources and as the host city of the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. This will not only show our country to viewers around the world. It will bring people to the Lower Mainland and Burnaby. We are excited to see the opportunities this provides and also what the future holds.

[1520]

The Speech from the Throne and Budget 2009 are demonstrations of the government's commitment to investing in British Columbians. The government is navigating the economic storm by protecting social services and creating jobs. Burnaby is benefiting from much of this, and I look forward to the future developments the throne speech brings.

N. Macdonald: As always, it's a pleasure to have an opportunity to stand and to speak in the House. What's going to happen here is we're going to try to keep it, I think, to 20 minutes. I think, as the person before me found.... We came to the House at the same time. I can remember my first speech, where the idea of speaking for half an hour was something that was hugely intimidating. The transition that we've made is that now, limited to 20 minutes — to be pulled down after only 20 minutes — it seems you have so much more to say.

I just want to say that there are many people who are leaving the House and are retiring from this position, and I wish them all the best. There are others of us that are going for a job review. I certainly want to say that while I'm hoping that everything will work out well, most of the things about this experience have been something that's been very enjoyable to me. I enjoy it in the House. I feel privileged to be here. I get to meet some really lovely people that I will remember always, and that's special.

What a lot of people don't see within the House are the other things that go on. I'll just give you an example from just yesterday. I was coming back from a meeting with the Attorney General. That meeting had gone very well, and we both had the sense that we were helping somebody.

There are not many jobs.... I mean, I think teaching's like that, but there are not an awful lot of jobs where you can walk back and think that you actually helped somebody. That's something that the public doesn't often see. They do see the conflict that you have in here, which I think is a good thing and which I love, but they don't see the human touches very often, where people and individuals are helped.

I very much appreciated the people that have done that — gone that extra way to make sure that individuals

are helped. And as I was walking back, I walked into one of our newer members, and the comment that she made was, "He's wonderful on those individual cases," and certainly I appreciate it.

There are many, many people that I would say.... And my own members as well. You know, each and every day it's fun to come to work, and it's interesting. It's never boring, and that's a wonderful thing.

Now, part of my job — and I enjoy it — is to test the government and to make sure that the things that are important to the people that I represent are brought forth in the House, that the assertions that the government makes are tested and that another perspective is put forward.

With the throne speech, there are a few things that I want to speak to. Before that I'll just mention that within the budget speech, I had the opportunity to speak for 30 minutes on the perspective that Columbia River-Revelstoke would bring to the assertion that health care and seniors care is in a place where it needs to be. I pointed out the shortcomings that we need to address.

I also had an opportunity to talk about education and the areas that I think need to be improved and which I would say the budget did not properly address.

I also spoke about private power and the deep concern that the people in my area have about the giveaway of our rivers. I also touched on a local issue, Jumbo Glacier resort, which again is an issue that is of tremendous importance to people in the area, and the underlying principle that in a rural area well removed from Victoria we should be able to make decisions for ourselves and be masters in our own house. That's something that I know people in the Kootenays feel strongly about.

We have the ability to do tremendous things when we are given the ability to make decisions, and I would point to the Columbia Basin Trust and other initiatives that would show that.

[1525]

In the short time that I have now I just want to talk about a few things that people have talked to me about that I didn't hear in the throne speech in the way that I needed to and which I certainly didn't see reflected in the budget.

The first of those would be one that has come up often and repeatedly. It has to do with child care and the need for improved child care. The idea of accessible, affordable, high-standard child care is, of course, a social issue, but it's also — what I'm hearing increasingly, of course — recognized as an economic issue. So you have not just the groups that are directly impacted by child care talking about it, like you would expect, but it's also chambers of commerce that are saying that it is a reasonable direction for us to go, to get child care.

The need is clear. The evidence is there that quality child care is good socially and economically. The current policies, I would argue, have largely failed, and the

solutions are well known. This is something that we can look to other jurisdictions or get the ideas from within our own communities and come up with policies that really work. So that's something that people talk about that I haven't seen reflected here.

In the budget speech I talked about arts and culture, and I just want to touch on that again. Arts and culture, especially in a time of economic challenges, is an area that we really need to be thinking about investing in more rather than less. Arts and culture creates economic activity in a very cost-effective way, and it gives a community a heart and a soul.

I know that in the communities that I visit, I have the opportunity to go to a lot of arts and cultural events, whether it's in Revelstoke or Golden or Invermere or Kimberley. It's a place where the community comes together and where you see your friends and neighbours. You have friends and neighbours able to put on display the talents that they have, or else you watch people who come to the community and just share in the skills that they have. It's something that I think we often don't realize — just how important an economic driver it can be.

The other thing that I would like to mention is just around agriculture. We have a lot of local groups that have dealt with the agriculture issue. It's an important one. It is one that has certainly been neglected, I would argue, with this government. I think that many would argue that it has been neglected for decades, and it's an important one. There are people that are in the agriculture field that have great ideas, and given the support that they deserve, we can see tremendous things happening.

I also want to speak just really quickly about poverty. I had the good fortune to work and live in Africa for six years. The lesson that you would take from that is that there is a tremendous wealth of talents that are not allowed to give full bloom simply because they cannot break out of poverty.

We need to be very cognizant of the fact that in Canada we have done a good job, for the most part, in making sure that people don't fall into deep poverty, but it's something you consciously need to work to do. The trends that we have seen in this province and, in fact, across the country are that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. That is not a direction that we want to head. I think all of us want our friends and our neighbours to enjoy a level of comfort, and that's absolutely possible.

There are many initiatives that this government has taken that have increased poverty or, certainly, to be in any way kind, simply have not found a solution to that growing poverty. The idea that we would have a poverty rate for children that is the highest in the country is something that's deeply concerning. It's wrong. We could fix it, and we should fix it.

I want to talk just very quickly as well about affordable housing. I had the pleasure of working with my colleague from Vancouver-Kensington. He came into the communities that I represent and met with people that are struggling. You often don't think of communities like Revelstoke or Invermere as having affordable-housing or homeless issues or people struggling to find proper housing, but you absolutely do.

It was important to have those meetings and to offer solutions. I very much appreciate the work my colleague did in laying out a series of solutions that offered some hope for people that struggle with affordable housing.

Certainly within the budget and the throne speech, there was a need to deal more aggressively with the housing issue and to make sure that we do not have the crisis in housing that we really shouldn't have.

There was also concern about the cost of post-secondary education and the fact that if we continue in this direction, we are going to find that there is tremendous talent — which, as a society, it makes sense we would be developing — that is going to find that they miss opportunities simply because they have no way of paying for the education that they deserve. That's something that is, of course, a tragedy for the individual, but as a society as well, it is the wrong direction to go in, and it's something that we need to put our mind to.

I also need to talk about forestry. In my community and the communities that I represent, we have had forestry for decades and decades. I have never seen the forest industry in the situation that it is in now. If you go to Revelstoke, to Golden, to Radium, to Canal Flats or to Skookumchuck, it is mill after mill that is on reduced shift or is not operating at all, and the impact in the communities that I represent is profound. The impact for the whole province is yet, I think, to be fully felt.

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

This has been a wealth generator for the province for 50, 60 or 70 years, and it is an industry that faces unprecedented collapse. There are over 60 mills closed, and 25,000 high-paying, family-supporting jobs have been lost. The lack of attention and energy from this government absolutely appals me.

It is one of the poorest records, because there are things that can be done. There are ideas that should have been embraced, and instead you have had public policy that has exacerbated the dire situation in forestry.

One of the pleasures that I've had is to travel with the member for Cariboo North, who is the Forests critic, and have him come through the area and lay out ideas about how to go forward, and to meet with forest workers, foresters and forest company executives and talk through those ideas, and to have community meetings where people can come and test the ideas that are being

put forward. To participate in that discussion gives you a sense of hope about where we could go with forestry.

While it is a crisis, there are also elements of opportunity. Given the ability to make decisions, people in rural B.C. will find solutions to make forestry work, and we will get through what is a difficult time. But decision-making has to go to people in rural community, and this government has to listen carefully to what rural communities and rural forest workers are saying if that is going to happen.

What I would like to do now — and I recognize I only have about five minutes left — is introduce a motion. I move, seconded by the member for Port Coquitlam–Burke Mountain, the amendment that is on the order paper, and it reads:

[Be it resolved that the Motion for the Address in Reply be amended by adding the following: "But this assembly regrets that the Throne Speech fails to address the need for attention to be paid to rural British Columbians, particularly those who have been reliant on the forest industry where over 22,000 jobs have disappeared, that the government refuses to promote and protect jobs for all British Columbians, failing to address the fact that over 68,000 British Columbians lost their jobs according to the last monthly Statistics Canada report, that after eight years of service cuts and higher costs for average families this government continues to put their friends and pet projects ahead of the needs of everyday families, that this government failed to even mention the serious issue of community safety and gang crime and has failed in providing health care and education as is witnessed by eight years of hospital waiting lists, school closures, privatization, emergency room overcrowding and the long term care crisis.]

[1535]

I ask that the motion be put forward, and then I'll speak to it for the few minutes that I have left.

On the amendment.

N. Macdonald: The problem of bringing rural issues forward is one that we needed to address when we first came to this House. It was in the first week that we sat as new members, newly elected MLAs, that the member for Nelson-Creston — who is, of course, a legend to us on the NDP side — got us together.

He said that we needed to meet as a rural caucus once a week and that these meetings were not going to be meetings that simply had a social aspect to them. "We're going to meet in the morning. We're going to make sure that we have an agenda. We are going to make sure that minutes are kept. We are going to make sure that there is discipline about getting together."

One of the things that I'm particularly proud of is just how well that worked. There are 14 rural MLAs, and if you look back at some of the issues that came forward in this House that were dealt with, I think you will see that it represents not only the work of the rural caucus but also the commitment of my urban colleagues and our leader to make sure that rural issues were in the forefront, even though the media that is

here will very often have a difficult time understanding the issues that are brought forward because they don't experience them.

I'll just give you a list of just some of the things that were brought forward. In my very first question period the issue that was chosen was B.C. Rail. It had to do with fencing and crossing issues. Since then we've talked about a lack of cars and the impact that that has economically on communities along the rail. That was in question period — precious time given to rural issues.

You go on: ATV and snowmobile registration — that issue being brought forward. The meat inspection regulations — a very technical issue with huge implications for ranching and for small farms and small ranches throughout the Interior. That was brought forward consistently and explained and understood by the members of the rural caucus.

The water and sewer regulations. There again, something that in question period is a difficult story to tell, but a critically important story to rural residents. Rural agency stores. Agriculture and the Buy B.C. lobby.

Forestry was continuously about community transition and a whole series of things that needed to be improved — and even within question period but certainly within estimates and other processes, ideas about what should be done in forestry.

The gas tax and independent power projects, of course. The closing of courthouses and the implications that it has. The lack of conservation officers was dealt with, and the fire commissioner issue. The rural airport–Olympic issue more recently. The volunteer firefighters were included in the cancer legislation. It goes on and on.

These are issues that would only come forward if they were put together in a way that that could easily be understood and with people working together to bring them forward. Like I say, it reflects not only in the work of the rural caucus but also in the commitment to rural B.C. that you see on this side of the floor.

We have an agreement that we're going to stick to 20 minutes, and I see that my 20 minutes are up. As always, I thank the House for the opportunity to make these comments.

[1540]

D. Hayer: Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the recent throne speech, which I fully support. At this time I also want to say thank you to the members who are not running again because of health issues or because they want to spend time with their families.

I also want to say thank you to the family of Stan Hagen, who allowed him to serve and do the community work for so long. My colleague passed away while providing the services.

In the last eight years I have seen a lot of changes here, a lot of different health issues with different MLAs. I

know that everybody on both sides of the House comes here to provide their vision and their support so that they can provide and help their community and bring the issues there. I do support all the members who are not running again, who have decided to retire.

It is my privilege to speak to this throne speech. It is an honour to stand in this House and talk about a plan this government has for the future of British Columbia and its citizens. But because we will soon be going to our May 12 provincial general election, it is.... They have made a lot of changes in the constituencies. My constituency is one of them. There are some boundary changes that have been made.

I would first like to say thank you and take this opportunity to thank all my current constituents, who have done a great job to keep me informed on what they wanted me to do and what actions they wanted our government to do. I look forward to seeing them in the future and making sure that if they need any help, I will still be here, if I'm elected by my constituents, to keep on providing the services.

I'm definitely going to miss the people in my riding, which is now called Surrey-Fleetwood, in part of the riding that hasn't changed.

After all, we're all here to represent our constituents, to listen to them and to bring their issues. That is the only reason we are in this House. I tried to do that over the last eight years.

We are here to make the decisions and to ensure that the needs of all our residents and our constituents are heard. We are obliged to listen to them and what our constituents have to tell us. They have been telling us very loud and clear over the last eight years.... I have had a very honoured position in this House to listen to them and make sure their concerns are brought here.

They have wanted improved roads and highways. They wanted a new Port Mann bridge. They wanted new schools; upgrades to interchanges, highways and lanes on Highway 1; and more hospital space. They wanted lower taxes, and they wanted a strong economy. Over the past years this government has delivered on all those and will deliver more in the coming years.

This government's decisions, plans and vision are based on what we hear from our constituents. In fact, I just returned from my constituency on the weekend, knocking on doors and meeting with constituents. Every time I have the opportunity, I get together with them, and I meet with the community groups to learn about their wants and needs and what they wanted our government to do.

It is through such great groups and organizations that we meet — such as the Fraser Heights Community Association, the Guildford Partners Society, Tynehead and Port Kells community associations, Fleetwood Community Association — that I bring to the House the issues that are important to them.

I'm truly grateful to these wonderful non-profits and to the directors, the executive members and the volunteers, because they are there. They are never too shy about telling me what they want to see and what they want us to do. That is what we've been doing in this House over the last eight years.

In addition, I meet on a regular basis with such groups as the Surrey Board of Trade, Surrey Crime Prevention Society, Surrey Rotary club, Surrey Lions club and many other wonderful organizations that are there to strengthen our community. They are the true fabric of our place and our province that we call home. We have the best province in the world, the best place on earth, because of those volunteers, those non-profit organizations and the great constituents.

I also want to thank all those constituents who attended my regular monthly coffee day that we hold at The Pantry Restaurant. I appreciate their support and the concerns and suggestions they have provided me. These sessions, which I held every month since I was first elected in 2001, are excellent ways to hear from folks what they have to say, an excellent way to learn about the needs of the people within my constituency and to help me deliver those needs and wants of Surrey-Tynehead to our government.

I also want to say thank you to my outstanding support staff both in my constituency and in Victoria. Without their assistance and getting information to government and back to my constituents, it would be much more difficult, if not impossible.

[1545]

Lastly, I want to thank with all my heart the wonderful support I have received from all those constituents who, due to the riding changes again, will not be my constituents. They'll be in Fleetwood. I just want to say that again, because many of them were saying they were sad to see me running in the Surrey-Tynehead area instead of the other part. But both parts are very important, and I happen to live in the Surrey-Tynehead riding. So I want to make sure I keep representing them.

The Fleetwood area of the riding has done a lot of great jobs, and many of the people serving on the Fleetwood Community Association actually live in the Tynehead area. So we have a lot of common bonds, and we will continue them. I will make sure that we are always here to listen to my constituents.

One of the things that we receive is the help from our constituents, and we try to bring those views here. Sometimes they're different. I've been listening to the response to the throne speech and also to the budget from the opposition. They have different views, which is understandable. I guess they are in opposition, so they always believe their job is to oppose everything we say.

On the other hand, British Columbians are looking for help and looking for assurance. They're looking for leadership from this government in the time of this eco-

conomic crisis. That is noted in this throne speech, and that difficult time is the time of financial crisis that has rocked the world, basically, to its core. We have gone through some difficult times in this country. Yet in British Columbia there's hope, because there's leadership and a strength of purpose in this government and in this throne speech that offers hope and encouragement for the future.

Yes, the economy is tough, but thanks to the fiscal prudence and a great economic plan, British Columbia will be able to weather this storm better than any other jurisdiction. Over the past eight years we have operated on a plan that sees opportunities and takes them. We understand the importance that British Columbia has as a gateway to Asia-Pacific trade. We understand that without our innovation, British Columbia would have remained at a standstill, as it did in the late 1990s, unless we had made some major policy changes.

We on this side of the House have made a mindset to seek out that entrepreneurial spirit of British Columbia and have adopted the policies that will allow our constituents to prosper even in these difficult economic times.

I want to say that the motion from the opposition that was moved.... I don't support it. The motion is an amendment. So I'm going to focus on the throne speech, which I was originally going to respond to, because I think it's a good throne speech and I don't agree with the amendment to the throne speech.

We want to make sure we understand that clean energy and a green economy that we are focusing on is an economy that must be there. It must be worked with our government to make sure we make the positive changes that will make sure we have constructive changes so that we can continue to have a green and strong economy and to make sure the energy we need in the future is there for this province.

We don't have to look forward to, as some of the people would like to see, businesses going down. We want to make sure that our businesses do progress. Then we will need more energy, and we need to focus on clean energy. We want to make sure that we keep on doing that.

Change is what is necessary for us to survive and to forge ahead and to grow and prosper. Where we're at today, there's a struggle, especially because of the economy. We understand the importance of the Asia-Pacific. We need to help and focus on them, their strategic relevance to British Columbia as Canada's Pacific gateway. Today that is even more important than it was before.

We also understand the importance of knowledge and immigration, and that is why we also so strongly encourage the foreign-trained professionals and skilled workers to come here to take advantage of our tremendous opportunities in this province. This province was built by the immigrants, and we always have made great

strides in this because of our immigrants and also first nations who were here.

We also have many programs for the immigrants that are coming in so that they can work in the field they were trained in. That would be good for them, that would be good for British Columbia, and that would be good for Canada.

[1550]

On the other hand, every job that is here is important. We must respect every British Columbian, whatever job they do, because it is important and they support the family with that. We must not hide our heads in the sand and hope for the best and do nothing because of this economic crisis around the world.

We will, as this throne speech details, reach for the stars — for the top position available in the world — grow our strengths and take advantage of the opportunities available to us and lead proudly into the future, while recognizing the seismic shifts that are occurring in the world's economy.

To benefit in that economy and to continue British Columbia's place as the best place on earth, our government has answered the call for long-term thinking in this throne speech and in the provincial budget that followed it. This is why I support this rather than the amendment the member opposite has introduced.

We are creating in this throne speech a continuing mindset that provides innovation in everything from healthier living to a healthier health care system to innovations in new housing, transportation infrastructure and job creation.

We cannot solve global challenges by simply more government spending, unless we can focus our actions on integration, partnership, great collaboration, free trade and coordinated strategies that understand how fundamentally things have changed since the financial crisis around the world has happened, especially in the last six or eight months.

We have to deal with the reality of this moment while pursuing the opportunities of the future as they are defined in the throne speech, understanding the crisis and dealing with it to ensure current and future opportunities for all residents of our province. Part of that is understanding and restoring the confidence people have in our province by ensuring stability and reversing the psychology that economic crisis brings on people when these difficult times come.

British Columbia will survive these recessionary days, and it will grow with them and come out at the end even stronger, because nowhere on earth has there been more cause for hope and confidence than in our province here. There are no economies on the continent, perhaps even in the world, better positioned than ours to weather this storm of change and come through it stronger.

We are, as the throne speech stated, the lucky ones. We are uniquely advantaged as Canada's Pacific gate-

way to the world's fastest-growing market. Nowhere is that more obvious than in my city of Surrey, where great things are happening to move goods, services and products to benefit the residents and businesses of Surrey.

This government is building such things as the new Port Mann bridge to move traffic, building the South Fraser perimeter road to move goods to and from the ports to the rest of North America. We are upgrading all the interchanges on Highway 1 in Surrey and widening the Pacific Highway to four lanes from the U.S. border to the Trans-Canada freeway to ease the movement of products to and from the United States.

We are about to open the Golden Ears bridge, which will enhance the flow of commercial industrial products and greatly ease the traffic flows north and south across the Fraser River. Many of my constituents will benefit from that. On top of all that, we in Surrey are benefiting from improved air quality due to the elimination of pollution caused by cars and trucks stuck idling endlessly in traffic jams at the Port Mann Bridge.

Best of all, this government believes strongly that the best way for people to weather this economy is to have more money in their pockets. That is why we have the lowest provincial income taxes in the country and why more than 250,000 British Columbians with low income pay no provincial tax at all now. Anybody earning less than \$15,500 will pay no provincial income tax at all in British Columbia because of our government policies. Our taxes are low, and our standards of living are much higher.

We live in one of the most spectacular places on earth, which has physical and human assets that are second to none in the world. In less than a year the beauty of this province and all its strengths will be the focus of the world when we host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

[1555]

Those events alone will be huge assets to the future of our economy. Everything we do here will be seen by hundreds of millions of people throughout the world. I can assure you, Madam Speaker, that when all those millions of people see what a wonderful place British Columbia is, they will be visiting here, they will be moving here and they will be investing here in British Columbia. They will be seeing that beyond a doubt this province is the best place on earth where their dreams can come true and where families can grow, prosper and create futures.

British Columbians have confidence, and that confidence will move us forward, because we on this side of the House have made some prudent decisions in the last eight years. We have a financial plan, and we will stick to that plan. Granted, it contains, as recently detailed in the budget, significant fiscal restraints and discipline, but it also contains a new economic stimulus that is affordable, timely and cost-effective.

As the throne speech noted, last year almost \$1 billion of economic stimulus was put into the economy with tax

reductions and a climate action dividend. Not only is it time to make sure there's more money in the economy, but we have left more money in the pockets of taxpayers through the tax cut. This is not the time to take money out of businesses or individuals by increasing the taxes or increasing the costs to individuals and taxpayers by putting in new regulations or new policies that will scare them away and take the money out of their pockets.

That is why this government accelerated and expanded its tax cuts last fall. That is why every penny of carbon emission revenue and more has been returned to the taxpayers through the new tax relief. Over 100 tax cuts made by our government were critical in our economy's remarkable recovery over the last eight years. Those tax cuts generated hundreds of thousands of new jobs since 2001 and drove down B.C.'s unemployment rate to the lowest level in over 30 years.

Now it is even more important that we need to maintain the low income taxes and good policies. We will not slide down the easy slope of structural deficit. That will only push our debt onto the backs of our children and grandchildren. That is why our government works so hard to balance this budget and pay down the debt that occurred by years of overspending under the last government. That is why a future surplus will be used to eliminate the dead weight of our operating debt.

But we are not only cutting all the purse strings. As the throne speech noted, we are funding more money into education and health care. In my city of Surrey, we have put more money into education, and you can see that by the new university we have in the central heart of Surrey, Simon Fraser University.

We have also created more universities such as Kwantlen Polytechnic University, with full status, so that students can stay right here in Surrey and take advantage of that. Also, we opened up the new Trades and Technology Centre in Cloverdale. There are more spaces available for post-secondary now, with more than 30,000 new spaces created since 2001. That is the largest expansion in the last 40 years.

We look forward to working with British Columbians and our businesses to make sure we do the right things and make the right decisions that will make sure that British Columbia stays the best place. We want to make sure that the economy stays strong and that British Columbians don't have to go to other parts of the world like Alberta, Ontario or the United States to find jobs, as they had to do in the past.

We want to make sure the economy stays strong, and we will keep on providing an economy that is strong and more money for health care — like the Surrey Memorial Hospital, the new outpatient hospital. We will continue to work better to make sure that we have more money for schools and education and social programs looking after the seniors and homeless people and people with addiction services.

I understand I only had 20 minutes. I understand our Deputy Whip is telling me that my time has run out, so I will look forward to the next time I get time to speak and say some more great things this government is doing and how the throne speech is so good that it's going to move us in the right direction in the future. I hope the opposition will support the throne speech too.

[1600]

Hon. J. McIntyre: Madam Speaker, I seek leave to make an introduction.

Introductions by Members

Hon. J. McIntyre: Today in the members' gallery we have very special visitors from New Zealand. Her Excellency Kate Lackey is the High Commissioner of New Zealand to Canada, and she's making a return visit to Victoria. She's accompanied by the newly appointed consul general in Vancouver, Clair Eeles, and also by Felicity Buchanan, the deputy high commissioner.

I'm looking forward to meeting them later this afternoon, and I'd ask that members of the House give them a very warm welcome.

Debate Continued

Deputy Speaker: Members, I'd just like to remind the House that we're on the amendment to the throne speech.

A. Dix: It's my honour to rise in debate on the amendment to the throne speech. Just to remind all members of the House what the amendment says, it says:

"Be it resolved that the Motion for the Address in Reply be amended by adding the following: 'But this assembly regrets that the Throne Speech fails to address the need for attention to be paid to rural British Columbians, particularly those who have been reliant on the forest industry where over 22,000 jobs have disappeared, that the government refuses to promote and protect jobs for all British Columbians, failing to address the fact that over 68,000 British Columbians lost their jobs according to the last monthly Statistics Canada report, that after eight years of service cuts and higher costs for average families this government continues to put their friends and pet projects ahead of the needs of everyday families, that this government failed to even mention the serious issue of community safety and gang crime and has failed in providing health care and education as is witnessed by eight years of hospital waiting lists, school closures, privatization, emergency room overcrowding and the long term care crisis.'"

It's an excellent amendment, put forward by the member for Columbia River–Revelstoke, which I think summarizes in many respects our response to a Speech from the Throne that lacked any ideas, any substance and was the reflection of a government that at this crucial moment in the history of British Columbia was out of gas.

For me, this time, this period representing the constituents of Vancouver-Kingsway — representing their

priorities, which are very different than the priorities expressed in the throne speech — has been a great honour.

It's been a great honour, when I think of the issue of community safety referred to in this amendment, to work with people like David Toner and Sandy Martins-Toner on the issue of SkyTrain safety, so central in my constituency of Vancouver-Kingsway, indeed in my colleague's in Vancouver-Kensington. David and Sandy lost their son Matthew, as everyone knows, at a SkyTrain station. Through their grief, they have become advocates not just of SkyTrain safety but of safety for the community.

I think of Sheshleen Datt, whose views are not reflected here in the government's throne speech but certainly are in the amendment. She herself faced an incident at Nanaimo SkyTrain station and spoke out and was an advocate for her community, an advocate for change.

I think of my friend Vishy Ganeshan, who runs a business on Kingsway and struggles to make that business survive but also contributes to the community — hires people with developmental disabilities to work in his business, volunteers at Collingwood Neighbourhood House and makes an enormous contribution.

I recall that one day his business was vandalized, and standing with him.... It's a great honour as an MLA to be able to stand and raise issues, contact the police and raise public concern about the vandalism involving an important business in our community, which is Simply Curries, and actually stopping the vandalism and ensuring that Vishy was able to carry on his business and his dreams in the way he saw fit.

Our priorities as a community — and it's been my honour to work on some of those priorities — are reflected in the efforts of people like Jackie McHugh and Bobby Sempt, who work hard in their community every day to maintain the sense of history of the community of Collingwood. They, for example, have worked for the last number of years to save fire hall No. 15 and to save Carleton School.

All of us know — my colleague from Vancouver-Kensington knows this — that at Carleton School in March of 2008 someone set fire to the roof. There was damage done, and this government has failed to repair that school — in spite of the fact that it is a historic school, in spite of the fact that it was built in 1896, in spite of the fact that it's used by two kindergarten classes and in spite of the fact that the government has an obligation as the insurer.

[1605]

As reflected in the amendment, this shows a lack of seriousness about education and about ensuring that the history of our province and the needs of the community are reflected in the actions of the provincial government.

I think it's shameful, but I think the efforts of Jackie McHugh and Bobby Sempt and so many people involved

on the parent advisory committee at Carleton School working with us.... We're going to continue to raise that issue, and I am sure that after the next election, when there's a change in government, we'll be able to do what the government should have done a year ago, which is to fix the roof on the school and not let that historic school building deteriorate.

The focus of the amendment is the failure of the government to adequately address the economic crisis facing our province. I want to talk about the economy, because it's one of the concerns — it's certainly reflected here in the amendment — that people across the world are thinking about, but certainly across my constituency of Vancouver-Kingsway.

The performance of the government in this past year in particular has been woeful on the economy. In good economic times they failed to diversify and prepare our economy for difficult times. They wasted the good years, and now, when we're facing years that are more difficult, they are not responding adequately to the situation.

Let us consider the history, because there's often a lot of misinformation put forward in this House about the history in terms of economic growth for British Columbia. Everybody knows that in the history of British Columbia the economic growth and the economy have waxed and waned, dependent sometimes on the international value of resources and other circumstances that are external to the province.

Let's look at the three most recent periods of the three most recent governments and put that in context. While year to year there have been significant changes in the way the economy has grown, over periods of time it's actually been relatively stable.

For the period from 1975 to 1991, when the Social Credit Party led the province. Average economic growth in British Columbia was 2.9 percent over that period, year to year. From 1991 to 2001 — the fiscal year ending 2001, which is the last year the NDP was in office for a majority of a year — average economic growth was 2.8 percent. If you take us through this budget year, average economic growth under the B.C. Liberals was 2.6 percent.

Now, some people might dwell, in receiving those statistics, on the fact that it was slightly lower in the B.C. Liberal times than in the other times, but the reality is that if you look over a period of time, what you're seeing is a relative stability in long periods of economic growth but great differences in year-to-year growth.

The differences, indeed, between those governments are what they do and who benefited. What's unique about this period, I would argue — especially the years that were good, that were on the high side of 2.6 — was the failure of the government to prepare, the failure of the government to address critical needs in terms of social services and the decision by the government to, in a sense, impose new costs on middle-class people,

on middle-income people, and cuts on those who need government services in favour of the wealthy. That's been their pattern.

Often when we talk about these issues, the government says, "Well, you're being divisive," but it was the government's actions, I would argue, that were divisive. When you raise medical services premiums by 50 percent effectively to defer a high-income tax cut, that's being divisive, I would argue.

I would add that this government was the first government in a very long time in British Columbia to inherit a surplus. According to the Auditor General of British Columbia, an independent officer — \$1.1 billion surplus. That's what they inherited — at the time the largest surplus in the history of British Columbia. They inherited that.

Contrast that to other governments. Contrast that to the inherited deficit from the 1991-92 budget, which was \$2.4 billion on the other side, so a \$3.5 billion of difference. But it was even more significant. Obviously, the economy was smaller. That was 2.9 percent of GDP, the largest deficit in history, then or ever. That was the difference.

They inherited this surplus, and what did they do with it? At the end of this cycle of deficits that the Minister of Finance has put before us, they inherited the largest surplus in history. They will have gone six deficit budgets in ten years. That will have been the record, and this despite the fact — and this has nothing to do with the government — that they've had, during much of that period, record commodity prices.

[1610]

Let's just give one clear example of that. The price of copper was very important in B.C. In 1998 — this had nothing to do with the government of the British Columbia — the price of copper was 63 cents a pound. In 2008 the price of copper was \$3.25 a pound. Nothing to do with the government but a huge benefit to the economy, and they waste it. We've seen a decline in health and education services in a time when the value of resources that we all own was high. This, I think, was a serious mistake and reflects the poor priorities of the government reflected in this amendment to the throne speech.

What else happened in this time? We saw a significant growth in inequality. If you look at the whole period, the way in which the government distributed tax cuts and spending cuts in ministries, what you'll find is that in real terms, as a share of GDP, social spending declined by one-quarter — 23.5 percent, just under one-quarter — the amount of money we spend on social spending.

They cut the minimum wage, because they created a training wage at \$6 an hour. They cut the minimum wage in this period to \$6 an hour. Apparently, according to the Premier.... We heard this on the weekend, and I think people should reflect on what this says about this government.

The Premier said on the weekend.... He referred to a minimum wage increase as a payroll tax. That's how he referred to the wages people receive. He referred to it as a payroll tax. He's against the minimum wage increase. He said it.

Interjections.

A. Dix: Well, there you go. The Minister of Finance says that the reporter got it wrong. So was he against the minimum wage? That was what he was speaking about. He was speaking about his opposition to the minimum wage. This Premier, who increased his own salary by 54 percent, was talking about opposing an increase in the minimum wage. That's what the reporter got wrong? As reflected in this motion, I think that reflects the lack of priorities of the government.

What do we see in terms of children in poverty? Five consecutive years — not according to us; according to Statistics Canada, on the low-income cutoff — we've led the country in child poverty. That means families in poverty.

I just want to put it in context for what it means in my constituency — if you look at my constituency and the average income in my constituency, what that means. It means one in five people in poverty.

The member for Vancouver-Kensington knows this area well. We'll start on the border of his riding and my riding at 45th and Nanaimo. Hon. Speaker, you can go up 45th to Kingsway. You turn right and down Kingsway towards Burnaby. You travel along Kingsway to Boundary Road. You turn right on Boundary Road back to 45th, and then you go down 45th to Nanaimo again. Think of that area of Vancouver, my constituency.

Just in my constituency, if you look at the number of people living below the low-income cutoff, it's like everybody who lives in that area is in poverty across the community — everywhere. Think of walking around that area and of everyone who lives in that area, which is a very significant part of Vancouver. Everyone below the low-income cutoff. Everybody, according to Statistics Canada, living in poverty.

That number has increased under this government. The level of inequality has increased under this government. What that means, I think, is that our society, when that happens, becomes a less entrepreneurial society. My argument is that when children live in poverty, they don't have the same opportunities to be the artists, the entrepreneurs, the lawyers, the firefighters of the future. This is what this government has done in good times.

This is not an ideological question; this is a question of political neglect. The Conservative government in Newfoundland has a plan to address poverty. The Liberal government of Quebec has a plan to address

poverty. The Liberal government in Ontario has a plan to address poverty. The NDP government in Manitoba has a plan to address poverty.

In British Columbia, when faced with these figures — which aren't our figures; they're Statistics Canada figures — which show the record of this government on the issue of poverty, what does this government do? They spend all their time denying the figures and none of their time addressing the real poverty reflected by those figures.

What has that meant for key public services in my community of Vancouver-Kingsway as reflected in the motion which talks about education? What has happened? Well, in my constituency of Vancouver-Kingsway, I'm talking about three schools that primarily serve the community. Some of the students in the community are served by Van Tech, but it's principally Killarney, Gladstone and Windermere. Those three schools....

[1615]

Interjection.

A. Dix: Well, that's only one part of the motion. The Minister of Finance needs to read the whole motion. He's a little confused over there. He's a little testy over there, hon. Speaker.

But the people who should be testy are the parents of students at Gladstone and Windermere and Killarney, because this government passed legislation that said that class sizes shouldn't be more than 30. This government said that classes should not have more than three special needs children.

In my constituency alone, those three high schools: 38 classrooms with more than 30 students, 186 classrooms with more than three special needs students. That's the record. Pass legislation as if it doesn't matter. It matters to those children. You don't get to do grade 8 twice. You don't get to live and go through high school twice. You only get one shot. It's critical to your economic future.

Every study that has been done of the value of education to the economy has said that education levels are.... If you only need to know one thing about the economic development and growth of a society, it's education levels that you look at.

This government has allowed this situation to continue, and this was before the economic crisis, which this government apparently was the last to see coming. You know, the Premier went on television last October. He had no plan for poverty, no plan to address the situation in rural B.C.

What did he say? What did he do? Well, first of all, what were the brilliant ideas? Well, he froze ferry fares for two months in response to the recession — for two months. That's what he did. So ferry fares went back up February 1 as if the recession had ended.

Interjection.

A. Dix: "April 1 as well," says the member for Powell River–Sunshine Coast. That's right.

He froze property assessments, which in my constituency means that people saw an actual increase in property taxes because of what the Premier did. Because of what he did at the Liberal convention, it meant that a few people saw their property assessments frozen. The effect of it was that the majority of people, including, I believe, every single person in my constituency, will see higher property taxes than they would have had if he hadn't done it. That was one of his measures to fix the economy.

He talked about infrastructure projects that he was going to advance, and then he didn't advance any. He said he would cut waste, and then he didn't cut waste. His ten-point plan amounted to nothing.

Then they table a budget in February, and this is certainly reflected in this amendment to the throne speech. What does it do? It of course continues a consumption tax on the middle class — the Premier's gas tax. It shows that the key public services such as prosecution services and court services and education will face cuts in real terms in the next three years.

So here's their record. They failed to take advantage of high commodity prices in the construction boom to improve public services and prepare the economy for the future. They failed to anticipate this crisis long after anyone with access to the Internet or a pocket calculator would have seen it. They failed to respond adequately when the crisis came, and now they've given up. They're out of ideas. They're out of gas.

This is the only jurisdiction which has a choice that is continuing to deregulate, raising consumption taxes and clawing back health care and education in a recession. And that's why this amendment says that there has to be change. There has to be change on these key economic questions. They have failed us, and the situation as reflected in the throne speech is serious. They are out of gas, and they are out of ideas.

We need a government that will reduce consumption taxes in a recession and ensure that B.C. Hydro rates are fair. We need a government that will protect our rivers and keep them in public hands. We need a government now that will protect health care, because everybody knows that in hard economic times, with the social determinants of health, the demands for health care will increase, not decrease.

We need a government now that will recognize the relationship between education levels and every public good, especially economic development, and invest in public education. We need a government now that will make transit more accessible and provide the resources needed to keep our communities safe, not freeze critical money spent on public safety.

We need a government now with a plan to address poverty, because this government apparently thinks that

the people who aren't hurt first in a recession are people without, but in fact, they are the ones who suffer first and foremost in any period of economic decline.

[1620]

In short, we need a government in difficult economic times that is on the side of the people of British Columbia, that doesn't use the recession to destroy all of those institutions that we've built over decades. And that's why, come May 12, the people of British Columbia will accept the view as reflected in the amendment by the member for Columbia River–Revelstoke and defeat government.

J. Horgan: I seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

J. Horgan: I want to add to the comments of the Minister of Intergovernmental Relations to our friends from New Zealand. I had the good fortune of studying in the southern hemisphere. I became a great fan of Sir Richard Hadlee, and I think those Aussies cheated. Underarm bowling is out of line.

But back to my introduction. I'd like to advise the House that over the past number of months we've had the fearsome fivesome working in the basement for the opposition caucus. We've had our interns here doing good work for our group. Adding to the flavour and tenor of this place, they are: James Bagan, Shawn Courtney, Mike Gudaitis, Niya Karpenko and the irrepressible and indefatigable James Cybulski. Would the House please welcome the five interns who did a great job for the people of B.C.

Debate Continued

Hon. I. Black: I rise to speak against the amendment and to discuss what I believe are the crucial issues in front of our province at this point in our history.

Let me start by saying that I could not do what I do here, like many of us, without an incredible staff of people backing me up. I want to specifically thank Linda Kingsbury and Vicky Collins in my constituency office who, in my considerable absence, do a remarkable job of making me look good, and as anyone here will attest, that is no small feat.

I also have an incredible team in my ministry, on my immediate staff, of Jane, Angela and Lynette, as well as the irrepressible Trevor Halford and Joan Dick keeping me focused and, for the most part, on track. When I'm not, it's typically my fault, not theirs.

Madam Speaker, on a day when so many of my colleagues are speaking for the last time, I stand and wonder aloud: "Why do we come here?" I think that we come

here from different walks of life. I think that we come here from different backgrounds, from different experiences and, very often, different motivations.

I believe that one of the common things that binds us to come to this place is that we come here with a sense of values. We come here with a sense of what we believe. They differ, which is what makes the democracy necessary, and frankly, it's what makes it work. So I contemplate in my remarks what exactly are the values that I bring to the table, what my party brings to the table and what my government brings to the table.

What I bring to the table, and what my party brings to the table by way of values, first and foremost, has to do with the notion of a strong economy. Without a strong economy, frankly, a lot of the other debates don't matter. How lucky are we that we live in a country and at a time in history where we can have debates about what to do with tax dollars that are raised, because those reflect the opinions of our parties, of the people we represent.

I believe it reflects the fact that we have an economy churning off tax dollars that allows us to make such important investments like health care and education. I believe also that strong economies come from lower taxes and making British Columbia an attractive place for money to be invested by those who have it.

One of the other things I believe very clearly is that money has got legs. It goes where it's most welcome. We've proven conclusively over the last eight years that we get this concept, and I would argue that our opposition has proven conclusively over the last number of years that they do not.

The opposition leader has recently been quoted as saying that she'd decrease taxes. I'm not sure the rest of her team knows that, because so far they voted against about a hundred of them. "Tax cuts aren't right. Tax cuts aren't needed. Tax cuts aren't in the plans." Those are some of the various quotes that we've heard from members opposite in the NDP.

I happen to come from a school of thought that says: "Don't tell me you love me. Show me you love me." And I ain't feeling a whole lot of love when it comes to seeing support for tax cuts over the last eight years by the NDP. I believe very firmly that this is such a crucial part of driving the economy.

I'm also of the value system that when it comes to actually managing the economy itself, you have to maximize its potential. I think we've proven that over the last eight years. When it comes to the geographic diversification of our economy, unlike the comments of the member opposite who just finished speaking...

When you look at Ontario and Quebec, who still have a trade reliance on the United States of over 80 percent, and we are sitting in British Columbia having our trading relationship with the United States — a very important one, to be sure — down at the 53 percent level, it really shows that we have embraced the Asia-Pacific opportu-

ity and what countries like Japan, China and Korea have to offer us and the people in this province.

[1625]

We believe in leaving more money in people's pockets and reinvesting into the economy which, in turn, produces and has produced the highest government revenues that we've seen, so that we can, in turn, invest them in things that we deem important. Well, what is it that we deem important?

First and foremost, we believe in the families in this province. We believe that they require a very, very strong public education system. At \$8,242 per student, the education funding that we've put in place is the highest that we've seen in history. We're seeing a public education budget this year of \$10.8 billion budgeted for 2009-10.

That commitment continues even in difficult times where we're seeing a demand, and meeting the demand, for safe and modern schools with a seismic upgrade program never introduced before — although earthquakes are certainly not new in this part of this world. It's a historical program. In the current budget we've got about \$1.3 billion in it to replace, renovate or expand schools.

We've seen in my own community how this has manifested into some historical announcements. Just a few weeks ago \$102 million worth of announcements in the capital projects for Maillard Middle School, Miller Park Community School and Ranch Park Elementary School, with respect to upgrading; as well as replacing in their entirety Centennial Secondary, one of the historic schools in my area; James Park Elementary School; as well as Pitt River Community School. Perhaps, under the current economic circumstance, equally important — and perhaps, in the short term, more important — are the 650 jobs that these announcements represent.

We've also seen incredible commitment to post-secondary education, where we see \$1.7 billion to be invested over three years in the post-secondary facilities, including projects to continue to increase capacity. We are right now experiencing, and have experienced, the largest expansion of post-secondary education in 40 years — 32,000 post-secondary spaces creating opportunities for our students.

These students are facing and embracing this education opportunity in a new world with global realities and global opportunities. As long as you believe, which I do, that students represent the very future — they are our greatest resource — then this indeed represents an area where we should invest. We'll see an extra \$228 million for post-secondary education over the next three years alone. The budget there is now \$2.25 billion, up about 43 percent since the year 2000.

The increased funding to the institutions themselves has gone up by more than 53 percent. I think of the institution in my own community — one that I am so very proud of — Douglas College.

We've also seen in this throne speech the notion of additional spending in the area of health education. Of the additional education spending, we have got \$40 million specifically targeted to increasing the amount allotted to health education to further reduce the shortages that we inherited when it comes to nurses and medical techs and pharmacy personnel and an additional \$23 million towards educating more doctors.

Now, when you have the opportunity, as we do in this part of the world and in this great province, of having a strong economy, as we've had, it's important also to invest in areas of need. There's no doubt that anyone in this House is unaware of how homelessness has gripped every western city in North America over the last number of years. It's concerning. It's tragic. It's the culmination of 35 years of approaching our mentally ill in a particular manner, and frankly, it's coinciding with the advent of cheap synthetic narcotics, including crystal meth and crack cocaine. It concerns me greatly as a parent of young children.

One measurement, and there are several, that you can use in identifying how we're addressing such a problem is money. This year we'll spend over \$469 million in the area of homelessness — five times what it was in the year 2000, when it was about \$120 million. It's been invested in some very, very creative ways. I've spoken in this House before about the Hope for Freedom Society, which has piloted one of the most ingenious and successful outreach programs that we've seen in this area.

With that program's success and going into the areas where the homeless are and trying to connect them on a one-on-one basis with various social assistance options and housing options, we have taken 4,600 people off the street in this province, and 80 percent of them remain housed today.

Then, for those who are not homeless but who are at financial disadvantage, we've got a rental assistance program. Introduced in 1996, this program now gives almost \$9,200 annually to a family earning less than \$35,000 a year. But this is not the only way to address homelessness. We also have to look at what we're doing in the area of addictions. We now have \$1.2 billion being spent every year on mental health and addictions — up 42 percent since 2001.

[1630]

These are numbers, but at the end of the day, these numbers translate into people's lives. Their investment in this area is specifically focused on that reality and acknowledges the fact that, at the end of the day, we're dealing with moms and dads and brothers and sisters, parents of kids, older brothers and older sisters whose lives are lost and who need assistance in getting them back under control.

We've seen the adult community health beds increase by 57 percent since 2001, again showing that this is an important area in which to invest.

For those families who have managed to avoid issues of addiction and are blessed without having challenges in the area of mental health but still have a financial challenge, things that government can do include what it does with their taxes. Now in British Columbia those in the lower thresholds of our income brackets either pay no tax at all, thanks to changes we've made in the last eight years, or they've seen a 71 percent reduction in the provincial income tax that they do pay.

Then I look at our seniors. We changed the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters program a few years ago such that now almost 16,000 elderly get a \$679-a-month allowance to help them stay in their homes, where they want to be. That's up 3,700 people from 2001, a very meaningful and a very measurable way to take care of the men and women who built this province and who allowed so many of the opportunities that I enjoy and that my children enjoy and that someday, if I'm so blessed, my grandchildren will enjoy.

What else are we doing for them? Well, one of the general areas where we've made such investments is in the area of health care. Health care, as was announced in our recent budget, now consumes 90 percent of all net new expenditures in the budget, clearly a priority for our government.

Yet when you stand back and look over the eight years, it's not just a recent occurrence. The health care budget is now 70 percent more than what it was in 2000-2001. It's gone from \$9.4 billion a year — and that's a lot of money to begin with — to now being over \$15.7 billion.

Where did that money come from? Where did that \$15.7 billion come from? It came from a strong economy, because this government understands what it takes to deliver, for its citizens, a strong economy. Then doing so, we have doubled the number of medical spaces that we have in terms of training our doctors and doubled the number of nurse-training spaces as well.

The results are already being seen. I mean, you don't train a doctor overnight. It takes several years, and nurses are the same thing. But we're already seeing some impact as a result of this increased focus on educating our medical personnel and the increased focus on the amount of money that we put into the health care system.

We're seeing median wait times down significantly. To the elderly citizens of this province — including, frankly, my parents at one point — this is very, very meaningful, as we see the hip replacement median wait time dropping by 41 percent, knee replacement down 33 percent and cardiac surgery down 40 percent.

For the men and women who are waiting for those procedures and for their families, who are anxious on their behalf and worried about their loved ones, those are significant numbers. That's a significant difference in the lives of our citizens.

Of course, in this day and age of awareness when it comes to pharmaceutical alternatives for young and old

alike, we've seen an increase in our Pharmacare budget, going up by more than 60 percent since 2001.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

But one of the areas where I think we clearly distinguish ourselves from Her Majesty's Opposition is in the area of understanding the needs of small business and understanding and appreciating and respecting the fact that 90 percent of the businesses in this great province are indeed small businesses. There are 370,000 jobs that just weren't here in 2001. Most of those have been created by and continue to be created by small business.

Yet they find themselves in frightening and uncertain times with what's happening in the global marketplace. We've got young families right now who are worried about their jobs. We've got young workers who are nervous about the opportunities that may or may not await them when they've completed either their high school or their technical college or university training.

It's yet this point that makes me fail to understand how the NDP cannot understand the implications of imposing a cost increase on small business of 25 to 35 percent and the impact that this will have on small business. Ninety percent of the businesses in this province, who employ most of the people in this province, are going to be so severely impacted if the 25 percent increase to the minimum wage proposed by the NDP opposite goes through.

[1635]

I have spent a tremendous amount of time over the last year touring British Columbia within my role. I'm being a true Canadian young lad. I'm a believer in the holy grail of Tim Hortons. I have talked to dozens of owners of Tim Hortons around this province in the last year. You know what the main question I ask them is? "What are you paying your people, and what would you do if the minimum wage was increased for your staff?"

Well, there's a couple who own a Tim Hortons not far from my riding by the name of Lois and Murray Swanson. The first thing that they told me is that they're paying well above the minimum wage. In their case, fully burdened up with the benefits and whatnot which they pay in what has been a very competitive labour market, they're paying in the \$11 or \$11.50 range as an average.

I asked Lois, and I asked Murray: what would be the impact of this? They said to me that there would be fewer employees. There would be reduced hours, reduced benefits. To quote Murray directly: "How is that going to help those employees of mine who are single moms? How is that supposed to help?"

Then I turned to another restaurateur in our area, a gentleman by the name of Willie Kwan. Very successful. He's employed hundreds, if not thousands, of young people in the northeast sector of the Lower Mainland over the last number of years — many of them young, many of them university students.

I asked him the same question. "How is that going to impact you?" His exact response was: "This will be hardest on my longest-serving employees — students who started with me when they were 16, 17, 18 years of age who are now trying to pay for their post-secondary education. They're now college students, some of them making up to \$16 an hour, who would have an expectation. Most earning \$15 an hour and less would be expecting some sort of raise if the minimum wage went from \$8 to \$10. I can't deliver on that. I can't take them from \$16 to \$18. I just can't do it."

What I can't get is why the NDP can't see that the damage caused by this reckless promise to impose a 25 to 35 percent increase on the costs for small business, a \$450 million cost increase.... I don't understand why they don't see the damage that that's going to cause and how the economic imperative, the so-called economic stimulus that it would cause, would put 52,000 people out of work.

How is putting 50,000 people out of work some sort of an economic stimulus? To threaten the livelihoods of up to 52,000 people under these particular circumstances is economically illiterate at best and will kill small business in British Columbia.

At this stage, as I reflect on where we have been in the last eight years and on where I would like to see British Columbia go in the next four years, as I turn to my constituents, as we turn to our constituents on the government side of the House, some messages are very, very clear. We will not turn our back on the small business community of British Columbia. We will not turn our back on the men and women who are building their dreams — not just for themselves, not just for their families, but also concerned very dearly about the impact of such a notion on their employees.

We will not turn our back on the young workers of British Columbia who are getting their first jobs, who are building some skills and some experience and are trying to chart the course of the rest of their lives. We will not turn our back on the students who are paying their way through school, some of them most in need, and we won't turn our back on those who have their jobs put in jeopardy by such a reckless notion.

We will heed the plea of Murray Swanson, who said: "Don't stop sticking up for us. We need you, and so do our employees." We will not let these people down.

J. Horgan: Here I was going to be nice to the member for Port Moody–Westwood, but to listen to his impassioned appeal to keep wages down for working people, to stifle growth, to lead the nation in the lowest minimum wage.... If that's the ambition of this government.... It was mentioned in their throne speech.

Fortunately, we have the good fortune of speaking to the amendment brought forward by my capable colleague from Columbia River–Revelstoke, so I won't have to be as negative as I would have been otherwise.

The proposed amendment goes as follows. I'll just read some of it. "...this assembly regrets that the Throne Speech fails to address the need for attention to be paid to rural British Columbians, particularly those who have been reliant on the forest industry where over 22,000 jobs have disappeared...." Particularly those who are dependent on the minimum wage.

[1640]

As I stand in this place on the last day of the last session of this parliament, it has been a privilege for me to represent the people of Malahat–Juan de Fuca. As I mentioned in my response to the budget, the redistribution of ridings resulting from the last commission will put an end to Malahat–Juan de Fuca, so I'll be the last member for that constituency. It's a sad day because the ability to represent the Cowichan Valley, the West Shore of Victoria as well as the west coast of Vancouver Island has really been a treat.

It's been a challenge, I have to say, because of the geography. I know I'm going to hear from my friend from Bulkley Valley–Stikine about challenges of geography. But for a suburban, urban and rural constituency, as I've been representing, it is a bit of a challenge. But I do get to go home to the bosom of my family every night. While other members are still driving to the airport, I am at home with my family having dinner. So that's been a delight as well.

I have a few people to thank — not surprising. We can't do this job, as all members know, without assistance from our constituency staff, led ably over the past two years by my friend, now, Shannon Russell.

Hans Frederiksen. Some 35 years in the law courts across the way, and Hans came in to volunteer one day. He said he wasn't going to come in on Friday. I said: "How about if I paid you, Hans? Would you stick around?" I've had the good fortune to have Hans part-time, even though he'd prefer to just spend time in his garden. He's been invaluable to me doing casework and doing the important constituency work that we all depend on.

I have had a clutch of volunteers as well, led by Larry Fofonoff, Shirley Christina and the irrepressible Katie Carswell over the past number of months — and years in the case of Larry — who have come in and volunteered their time to do civic duty and assist their neighbours and the people in our constituency. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for that.

Here at the Legislature, Angela Giuliano has the pleasure of trying to manage myself and the member for Vancouver-Kingsway, as well as the member for Coquitlam-Maillardville. She does a fantastic job of keeping us all on time and where we're supposed to be.

Angela, thank you very much for the work that you do.

I've been listening to interventions by other members, and I think that what I want to touch on in this last opportunity in this session is the misplaced priorities, as

I see them, of this government relative to the people in Malahat–Juan de Fuca. I sent out a survey just recently, following the budget. I asked a few questions of my constituents. I've had quite an overwhelming response to a whole range of questions.

I tried to run the waterfront. I listed ten different categories for people to respond to. Actually, the mail is still coming in. I'm still getting responses on my website.

The number one challenge that members of the public in my community have pointed out for me is transportation. I want to read an editorial from the *Juan de Fuca News*. It's titled: "E&N Part of Answer." I'll just read it, if you don't mind. It goes as follows:

"The interest generated by the recent Canadian Transportation Commission hearings into the future of the E&N Railway has also focused a great deal of attention on the concept of commuter rail from the western community. This idea is a worthy one and one that must not be lost in the shuffle as was, for example, the idea of building a tourist booth adjacent to Goldstream Park.

"The western community is plagued with unfortunate transportation problems, and their solutions should be a matter which takes a high priority for local politicians. The E&N commuter rail is only part of the solution, but it is an important part. We must press for its adoption at the same time we are searching for solutions to the problems of public transit within the community and for ways to improve cheap, effective public transport between the western community and the downtown core at non-peak hours.

"With energy costs increasing, population growth and the problems becoming more and more complicated, it is imperative that we press for solutions now because we can't afford to wait any longer."

That editorial was written Wednesday, November 29, 1978. I'd like to think that I've been a champion of commuter rail in my community over the past four years, but I'm a Johnny-come-lately to this — if I can use my name. I didn't mean to do that. It was just a slip of the tongue. It was just a fluke. I didn't mean to do it.

This is a pressing issue that's been apparent to many — certainly, the editorialists from the 1970s — for some considerable period of time. We've raised this issue — local representatives of all political stripes. I stood in front of a throng of media with the local Liberal MP. I stood with Conservative-friendly mayors. I stood with Liberal-friendly mayors and with my New Democrat colleague from Esquimalt-Metchosin to try and press the government for some stimulus dollars on south Vancouver Island that were substantial.

[1645]

While we see billions of dollars being spent in the Lower Mainland — a ten-lane bridge for the Fraser River — we're getting sidewalks. It's a thousand here, a thousand there, while there are hundreds of millions and, in fact, billions being spent in other parts of....

Interjection.

J. Horgan: Tens of billions, says my rural friend from Yale-Lillooet. This is a challenge for people here on southern Vancouver Island as we go into this period,

the election period. The government would like the people of southern Vancouver Island to believe that they're genuinely committed to trying to meet the needs and challenges we face here, but clearly, based on the feedback I'm getting from my constituents, they're not buying it.

My colleague from Port Moody was talking about the gracious and wondrous plans and proposals of the current government, but what I hear is that a gas tax and a highway to Whistler is not the foundation of an economic strategy. The member for Port Moody–Westwood talks about the outrageous assertion that we increase the minimum wage so that we can surpass every province but Prince Edward Island in having a livable minimum wage, and the response is: "That's onerous for small businesses."

Well, what's the carbon tax? What's the gas tax? That's not onerous? What are increased Hydro rates and home heating costs? What are those costs? They're irrelevant because those are costs imposed by the government.

That the Leader of the Opposition suggests raising the minimum wage to be on par with other jurisdictions in Canada is somehow outrageous. It wasn't outrageous, according to the Minister of Labour, when the Premier raised his salary by 54 percent. That was fine — just the cost of doing business. Nothing wrong with that. But we don't want to put the Tim Hortons out of business. I would suggest that the member for Point Grey probably doesn't spend a lot of time at Tim Hortons, but nonetheless....

An Hon. Member: I do.

J. Horgan: Well, you're not the member for Point Grey, are you? You didn't get a 54 percent pay increase like he did, and that he gave himself, in fact.

Anyway, certainly on this side of the House we don't believe that raising the minimum wage for citizens in our community, to try and help those at the bottom end of the economic scale, is necessarily a bad thing, provided it's accompanied with small business incentives. That was part of the proposal. The minister conveniently fails to raise that, but that's his right. That's his prerogative.

We're here today to combat. We're here to throw ideas back and forth, and if I choose to reject outright and without reservation the minister's ideas, I'm going to do that. I've got my 20 minutes. The people here are trying to be entertained. I'm doing my level best to keep everybody interested for the next few minutes or so. If I can do that at the expense of the minister, I'm delighted to do it.

There are a couple of other issues....

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Member, just a moment.

I just want to remind members on the government side that heckling needs to be done from your own place.

Continue, Member.

J. Horgan: Thank you, hon. Speaker, for protecting my honour there. I genuinely appreciate that. I appreciate that, and to see the member chastised, as he should be.

You know what? I represent the minister's parents. He spoke of his parents earlier on. I've been doing my level best to keep them happy for the past four years, yet I get pellets of scorn from the minister. It's outrageous.

Hon. M. Polak: Do you save all your eloquence for the last day?

J. Horgan: I save.... I don't know what I do. I just get up and start talking, Member, and that's usually what happens.

I've only got ten minutes. Stop with the heckling. I've got a number of issues.

I see the member for Prince George–Mount Robson. I want to touch on an issue that that she's familiar with because we've talked about it over the past four years, and that's a new secondary school in the Western Communities. I've read from an editorial from 40 years back. The same newspaper, which was brought into me by a constituent, made reference to the need to upgrade the local high school.

Well again, 30 years have gone by. A very able plan has been put in place by our board of education. They brought it to the minister's attention. She's listened intently to that, and I'm hopeful that in the next number of weeks the government will see, in its wisdom, an opportunity to lift the Liberal candidate and provide him with an opportunity to announce a brand-new school, and I will rejoice at that. I will pat that Liberal candidate on the back for delivering, as he should, a new school in my constituency.

Again, I've spoken with the minister's staff. She has been very gracious, and I thank her for that. I've had an opportunity to address this issue in great detail with the people that are making the decisions and advising the minister. I'm very confident that come May 15, when the capital plan comes forward, there will be two new schools in Langford. I look forward to that day — of course, as do my constituents. In the survey that I sent out, the second issue, after transportation, was education.

[1650]

The third issue was a bit more vague and ambiguous. It's the ever-popular accountability — government accountability. For those who are joining us in the gallery and didn't have the good fortune of attending question period today, one of the fundamental challenges over the past number of weeks — in fact the past number of years — is that the government on that side of the House introduced what they called a Lobbyists Registration Act that they said would have teeth so that the people of B.C. would know who was knocking on ministers' doors, saying: "This is what I want. This is what my clients want." It was supposed to allow the public to know

and understand who was benefiting from government in British Columbia.

Well, we've discovered — not just, as the Attorney General would suggest, through court documents, but through documents in the library just down the hall, through documents that were tabled in this Legislature — that a chappie named Patrick Kinsella, whom we talked about, and the members will know him.... He was the campaign chair for the Liberal Party in 2005.

Interjection.

J. Horgan: A chappie. I can say chappie, can't I? That's not before the court. Maybe if I said that today, the Attorney might have responded. Our good friend Patrick Kinsella who was here, by the way, in the 1980s plying his trade....

He's been at this for a long, long time. He's a pro. He's one of the best, and that's why he thumbed his nose at the government's lobby registration act. As a result, the government said two years ago that they would bring in a new act. It would have teeth. It would be vigorous, and it would protect the people of British Columbia from those who would try to benefit from inside information, from access to government decision-makers.

That was two years ago. Last year, last May as the House was rising, the Attorney General said: "We're going to get that act done if it's the last thing we do, by golly. It's a top priority." Right up there. Didn't mention it, of course, in the fall session which was cancelled and then restarted and then cancelled again.

We came back in January — another opportunity. The minister said: "Oh, it will be there. We're going to have a lobby registration act, come hell or high water." That was the minister's assertion.

Well, here we are. The clock is ticking, about an hour or so to go. No lobby registration act. Not a peep from the minister. I have one right here. It's Bill M204 in my name, Government Integrity Act. I whipped that up with some kids in the basement in about two weeks. You've got leg. counsel. You've got the whole Ministry of Attorney General. You've got a former judge who said he was committed to a process. They couldn't with their legal minds, their brilliant legal minds, bring forward to this place an act to protect British Columbians from nefarious lobbyists. Couldn't do it.

Interjection.

J. Horgan: I'd love to vote on this one, hon. Member. My friend from Kingsway says: "Why don't we vote on this one?" Sadly, although the calendar says that we have two more days to sit here, the Government House Leader has seen enough. He said: "Enough already. Let's get the hook. Bring in the hook and get us out of here before the Attorney General makes a complete fool of himself

by standing up repeatedly and saying, 'I've got nothing to say. It's before the courts.'" B.C. Hydro is before the courts. B.C. Transit....

We didn't mention B.C. Transit today. We did talk about TransLink so there was a tangential link there to a significant issue of public policy. Nonetheless, that's how it goes.

In the throne speech we quite often look at who benefits. Where is the government going to put its energies? Where is the government going to set its priorities? On this side of the House, we've been able to highlight over the past number of months the reduction in services to those who need them the most.

What have they done on the other side of the House? They've proposed a 40 percent increase for senior public servants. Again, I've already referenced the Premier's 54 percent pay raise, but no minimum wage. I know, were the minister in his seat, he'd take the opportunity to heckle me right now, but he's holding back, and that's a good thing. He wouldn't want to be chastised again by you, hon. Speaker.

Hon. S. Bond: Or by us.

J. Horgan: Or by anybody else. There you go.

The government had an opportunity in this throne speech to speak to another important issue in my constituency, and that's the release of private lands from tree farm licence 25.

The Minister of Lands is here, and I know he's met with the electoral area rep for Juan de Fuca, Mike Hicks, who is trying very hard to get some coherent policy from the government on how they propose to manage the debacle that they've created by releasing 28,000 hectares of forest land previously in a public tree farm licence to a near bankrupt forest company, Western Forest Products, with no guarantees of job protection, no guarantees of any compensation and no guarantees of first nation accommodation.

[1655]

Again, the Premier talks one day about climate change, and the next day we see him releasing lands for development and urban sprawl out on the west coast of Vancouver Island. There's no transit system. No SkyTrain to Jordan River, I have to say. I know that would probably be a bit of a waste of money. I would even agree, perhaps, with the Minister of Labour that building SkyTrain to Jordan River would be a bad idea.

But the guy who bought the land from WFP said, "I'm going to put a community of 10,000 people on a two-lane road" — that on a bad winter day oftentimes falls into the sea. I was out to Port Renfrew just two weeks ago, and the two lanes have become one lane for almost half a kilometre. The road — fallen into the sea.

I raised it with the Minister of Transportation. He says he's going to put his best people on it. No progress.

We're at the end of the road. We can get sidewalks here on southern Vancouver Island, ten-lane bridges to cross the Fraser, but we have roads that are literally falling into the sea in Malahat–Juan de Fuca, and not a word about it in the throne speech.

Not a word about the tree farm licence. Not a word about child poverty. Not a word about one minute and 30 seconds left to speak. Nothing like that. Nothing.

In closing, thanks to my friends here assembled, I do want to thank you, hon. Speaker. You've always treated me graciously, as have those who take the chair — the member from Boundary, the member from Kelowna who's not with us today. I hope I haven't offended anyone, but I did want to say, before I took my place, that the member from Kelowna....

I wish her well and all those who have had health challenges over the past four years. I know that this is a difficult job to do in the best of health. It becomes all the more difficult when we have our difficulties, whether they be with our family or with ourselves.

With that, hon. Speaker, I want to thank you. I want to thank all of my colleagues on both sides of the House for indulging me over the past four years. I've had a blast. If everything goes well, I will see some of you on that side over here, and the rest of us will be over there.

Hon. R. Cantelon: I rise today to put my support behind the throne speech and the broad direction that it outlines for the hopes and the future of people in British Columbia.

Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge the work and the commitment and dedication of members on both sides of this House who have worked so hard and have now decided to move on to different things — particularly the member from Kelowna, who sat beside me for these many years, for his wise advice and counsel.

They've all been a great help to all of us in the House, and they've all added to the mix in the debate. Sometimes in this House it may be taking an entertaining bent, but we all know that the members all have the interests of B.C. at heart.

I begin by saying we are certainly in uncertain economic times, and it's critical to people in my constituency, whom I represent and will hope to represent, of Parksville–Qualicum from Nanaimo to Qualicum Beach that their concerns are for the entire spectrum of our constituency, not only young people. Certainly the future is the young people, our young people. In that light I'd like to commend the direction that this government has taken in embracing a broader concept of education.

At one of the first meetings I was at, it became apparent that 25 percent of the children entering school are not prepared. This certainly pointed not to their fault but to the fact that we had not done enough to prepare them. So we've embraced the idea of a broader scope of education beginning in preschool and tasking what

we used to call school boards, as boards of education, to look after that.

In fact, we have done a wonderful job in education. Since 2001 we've increased the funding for education by over a billion dollars. The per-student fund — that's in spite of the fact that the enrolment has dropped by over 53,000 students. We've retained our commitment to the education of our youth. We've increased the funding by up to.... It now exceeds \$8,300 per student, a 33 percent increase since 2000 and 2001.

The other significant component is the capital providing new upgraded and new facilities. Now, the numbers really don't mean anything until you're there on the ground, as I was recently in Port Alberni, which is not a riding that is held by our side of the House. We announced a brand-new high school, but it would be more than that. It would be a neighbourhood of learning.

[1700]

I think it's very appropriate to talk about this, because it tells a story about how we relate to and interact with local communities and how we give them the authority — right to the students.

So there we were, making this announcement. As an announcer, it wasn't the usual what we refer to in our politicking business as grip-and-grin. No, I addressed a houseful, if you can believe this, of enthusiastic students. They weren't enthusiastic about my speech. I can tell you that. And yes, it was tempered somewhat by the fact that they weren't in school, and I commented on that when in classrooms. But they looked forward to the opportunity to help shape the form that their education is going to take.

Throughout the school there are suggestion boxes as to how they want to see their school — what shape and form that school will be, what features they want. So the students themselves have the opportunity.

I spoke with the leaders of the community, the chair of the school board, and they have a different vision. One of the most encouraging aspects of that vision was including facilities for drug and alcohol counselling within the school, the object being talking to the person who's going to be responsible for this. Yes, students get led astray by their temptations. Perhaps it's just trying it out. Perhaps it's, unfortunately, sliding into some sort of compulsive addiction.

Being able to have services within the school, they can receive counselling treatment and be pulled back from that terrible temptation or also assist the rest of the student body to avert those temptations. I think this is a very progressive way that we combine our spending capital with new projects for the community that will uplift everybody.

Now, people in my constituency.... It's not just the younger people. These uncertain economic times have caused the pensioners, the seniors in our community, in particular in Parksville and Qualicum Beach, to see their lifelong savings.... I'm sure both sides of this

House would acknowledge that when you've worked 35 or 40 years, you deserve a time to follow other interests and pursue a new phase in your life.

They have seen their investments, their nest egg, whether it be RRSPs.... If they happen to be General Motors employees, perhaps they see their pension threatened or diminished, and the style of life which they had hoped to achieve is threatened.

These people are very concerned. That's why this throne speech and the direction that this government has given — the emphasis on financial stability, the emphasis on accountability.... Certainly, in the budget speeches we indicated that we very reluctantly moved to a small deficit in this year and hope to pull out of it very quickly.

This gives them the reassurance that they need that the hope and the vision they have for the future — not just for their children and grandchildren; certainly, that's important too; but for their retirement years, their leisure years, which are stretching out longer and longer among our retirees — can be fulfilled in the way that they want.

I say "leisure." Very often it's not leisure. These people continue to work. They continue to volunteer and contribute their wisdom, their perspective, their experience to community projects, and it's very enriching and very valuable. We certainly want to present a vision to them that is hopeful, optimistic.

Generally speaking, the people of this province are very optimistic, very positive about the future. I think it's the nature of people who've lived out here, who've carved a living out of this beautiful but very rugged landscape, that they believe in a future.

I think we're in a position.... This government has led us to this position. This throne speech points the way to a future that's probably going to be better in opportunity than other areas of the world have, certainly, or than other areas of Canada have. I know that the Governor of California has even alluded to the fact that what we're doing in British Columbia should be emulated everywhere.

We expect that this may be a challenge for us, but in every challenge there are opportunities. In my area the workers of Harmac have grabbed this threat to their pulp mill as an opportunity and have been very, very entrepreneurial and opportunistic, really, in seeing an opportunity in what other people would see as chaos and disaster.

[1705]

The workers have put aside some of their demands that have been traditional in the industry. The management now are freed from the oversight of some Far Eastern multinational — in this case, it was a west coast multinational — so that they can turn their attention to managing the productivity of the mill. They work hand in glove. There's no such thing as worker or management. There are no suits and ties in this building, and I compliment the management and the union — the union's still there — for working together.

They've actually increased production by 25 percent, and they're expanding production. I think this kind of cooperative spirit, entrepreneurial spirit, shared by both parties, is going to be a model that we see more and more on the coast. I think it points the way very positively to a great future for British Columbia.

I'd also like to commend the communities for their work. Recently I've been fortunate to go through and announce to several of these communities that we would be able to see their dreams, if you want, fulfilled through infrastructure announcements that will enable their communities to expand, to lay the base. When we look at infrastructure, we're really talking about the future, about building the infrastructure future, the core of services that will support future growth.

These communities have identified their priorities, many of them in infrastructure, but not always in infrastructure. Sometimes they're to fulfil a broader need in the community. Spirit Squares, for example, and walking trails that talk to community spirit and individual and personal health, expand the opportunities for individuals to enjoy their communities and participate in it.

Finally, I'm not sure how much time I have here, Madam Speaker, but I would like to comment on the first nations. I've had the opportunity, through some of the tours that I've been on, to come into contact and discussion with first nations. They have embraced the new relationship and our commitment to that.

Yes, that does not mean that they wish to forgo treaty agreements and treaty settlements, but we heard today at a very moving announcement regarding Great Bear rain forest, where one of the first nations leaders said: "We would be happy with 6 percent unemployment." That for them is a goal they could achieve that would be exciting for them to move towards.

They're embracing this new relationship as a positive outreach to their community that gives them the economic opportunity so that they can build their economic opportunity while celebrating their culture. It's not something that has to now be put aside so that in order to achieve economic equality with us and with the European community, they have to compromise or sacrifice cultural values.

Instead, they see it as an opportunity to move forward as an equal partner in terms of celebrating their culture, in terms of enjoying the economic opportunity that this new relationship can do. We're building it step by step. There's no panacea across the way, but through great leaders like Robert Dennis and Snuneymuxw Chief Viola Wyse, we see that they're going to seize these opportunities and move first nations opportunities forward for their youth. It's going to be a wonderful thing to take part in.

Finally, I think that as the recently appointed Minister of Agriculture, I really have to say how encouraged I am in meeting the farmers and seeing how positive they are,

because they're by nature an optimistic group. You have to be when you rely on the forces of nature to realize a profit or a loss — a profit, presumably — from the fruit of your labours. They're passionate about what they do. They're truly passionate about what they do. They're committed to producing the greatest products, the best-tasting, the best value for their consumers, and they continue to do it year after year.

Not only that, but I was impressed by how innovative they are and how opposite of being risk-averse they are. They're willing to take a challenge on, move to new fields — bioenergy, new products, new species, new methods of producing their crops and other products. I think the agriculture industry is going to be a core, a base industry as we move forward. It's going to sustain us. It's a great industry and a great export industry.

[1710]

In summary, finally, I would say that I look very, very much forward to going back into the constituency and describing to the people, the constituents, what our policies are but, most importantly, to hearing and understanding what their needs are with respect to where they see our government moving forward, because in the end, this is what democracy is. It's going out, talking to the people and listening to them and hearing what their hopes and their dreams are.

R. Austin: It's my privilege to rise and take part in this debate on the motion about the throne speech not having much in it for rural British Columbia and the difficulties and challenges of rural B.C.

Prior to making a few comments, though, I would like to take this opportunity to thank those who have helped me over the last four years to do this job as best I can. Back in my hometown I have Denis Gagné working hard in my constituency office, along with Arjunna Miyagawa. Both have been incredible people, support systems for me, especially when I'm down here in Victoria, and I'd like to thank them.

In Kitimat I've had Roberta Walker, who has been my part-time CA there for the entire duration that I have been the MLA for Skeena. I would like to thank her.

Here in the buildings I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Lucy Mears, who on a daily basis ensures that I am in the right place at the right time.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to wish the best to all the Members of the Legislative Assembly who are retiring, leaving this chamber. I have had a great time working with all members of the House here. I know, having done this for a short time, that it's a very difficult job, and I appreciate the efforts that they have put in to do this on behalf of the citizens of their communities.

With that, I would like to maybe start. I am just going to speak for a few minutes. I understand that we have had to cut back our time.

I would like to take a couple of minutes to talk about advanced education. Of course, in the throne speech there was a commitment for funding for advanced education to be increased, which of course it does in the current budget. However, in the years to follow, there are some serious problems in the budget. In year 2 — that's 2010 to 2011 — it only goes up by \$1 million, and then there is a \$25 million cut three years out.

Remember that this is the government that cut 2.6 percent last year, right in the middle of the academic year. In fact, at Northwest Community College in Terrace they just recently tried to lay off three faculty which, fortunately, has now been rescinded.

My broader point, though, is this. With a recession that has now spread from northwest B.C. to the rest of British Columbia as a result of the financial crisis that has infiltrated the entire world economy, now is the time when people need greater access to post-secondary education. So why is there only an increase in this, an election year, and then cuts in the following years?

I have also not heard a vision for post-secondary education that lays out the role for community colleges in our overall system. The research shows that when a student spends time in their first and/or second year and then transfers to a full university for the final two years to fulfil their undergraduate degree, the success rate rises exponentially. Especially for students who have grown up in smaller communities, this is even more important. Yet university transfer courses are decreasing in colleges in the north, and we are left with strong support for the trades but not as strong support for the academic courses.

As people I'm sure are aware in this House and elsewhere, the B.C. community college system is one of the best in the world. Yet it must be supported so that existing programs are well funded and new ones added.

I'd like to also comment about the electrification of Highway 37. Again, we heard an announcement in the throne speech that there will be electrification up Highway 37.

It should be pointed out that in spite of seven years of high commodity prices, until the recent decrease that happened in the last six months, not a single new metal mine has opened in B.C. in all of this time. This is a crucial industry for all of us who live in northwest B.C., and the collapse of the Galore Creek mine has hurt an economy that was already reeling from the loss to the value-added forestry sector.

There needs to be a better system for consultation with first nations in all industrial activity that takes place on the land base as well as a truly open and democratic way for doing environmental assessments. The current system just doesn't work, not for any of the stakeholders — the first nations, the communities, the companies, the environmental NGOs or, for that matter, any interested citizen.

If we are going to create one system that encompasses both the province and the federal one, then surely there needs to be a debate as to what that system looks like and a governance structure that makes it open and accountable to all citizens of the area.

[1715]

I hope we soon see that the partners in Galore Creek can be brought back so they can get on with the construction of this mine, because notwithstanding that the current market for copper has softened, it has of course risen for gold. In any case, of course, a mine that has a life span of 20 to 25 years is constructed knowing that the commodity cycle would change during that period.

It's important that the private sector be brought back to the table for any transmission line to be completed in northwest B.C., but as I have said before on this topic, it is clear that the Tahltan of northwest B.C. would rather see a 138-kilowatt line so that there is gradual industrialization in their territory.

In the last eight years of Liberal government there has been a widening gap between the wealthy and the poor. In the northwest it has been extremely hard for families to look after themselves, as the job situation has been so devastating. Terrace, my home community, has seen an influx of first nations people who have come to the city to seek accommodation, as there is not enough housing on reserve. Also, there are not enough job opportunities or services such as social services, so they have no choice but to come to the nearest urban centre.

Part of the throne speech speaks about a change in our forestry industry, but for goodness' sake, this Liberal government has had eight years to bring about this change. So if appurtenancy was not economically sustainable, then what did this Liberal government replace it with? Were there tenure changes so that if a company did not want to use or could not make use of the timber allocation, then they could give it to some other company so they could make use of it and add some value so we can use our public forest to bring benefits to the citizens of this province?

Of course not. Instead, they could just truck the logs out of the region to process elsewhere or ship offshore and earn export dollars. This is how a developing nation treats its public resources, as they lack the knowledge, the technical expertise and the capital to add value to their resources.

We in British Columbia have these things in spades, and yet in eight years after the B.C. Liberals have come to power, all we have in northwest B.C. is log exports. Eight years on, and we have no value added to our public forest. Instead, the model that has infected northwest B.C. — i.e., the destruction of sawmilling capacity — has now become the norm in all of B.C., with very few exceptions.

As I'm speaking here today, the city of Terrace is under-going its annual budget for the municipality, and the

challenge is what to do now that the industrial tax base is so low. Of course, everybody at home expects a rise in the residential tax rate. What else can local government do to provide all the services that are expected from its citizens? But it needs to be made clear that we are in this mess because of Liberal government forest policy.

The neglect of northwest B.C. has been deliberate neglect, plain and simple. It has devastated the industrial tax base of my community, as all the mills have shut down. The result is that small businesses and residential owners have to pick up the slack — all of this in a recession that has gone on for over eight years.

I'd like to take the last couple of minutes to speak about energy. As we know, the B.C. Liberal energy plan has all new energy being produced only by the private sector. B.C. Hydro must be the only Crown energy corporation which has not been permitted to look at new sources of energy, other than upgrades to their heritage sites. This has been a disaster.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

Let me remind all members of this House and citizens watching that it is these heritage sites, created under Sacred administrations, which had a vision to bequeath to all British Columbians the incredible advantage of having the cheapest electricity, along with Quebec, of any jurisdiction in North America.... This wasn't only good news for households, which have historically had low electricity rates, but it was a boon to industry.

We have seen the public resources in northwest B.C. cut off from providing benefits to British Columbians. First, the forestry sector went, and then energy was given away. These things have to be returned to British Columbians, and in this election we intend to take back British Columbia for the citizens of B.C. so that we can provide jobs again in rural B.C.

H. Lali: I rise here to speak on this, the amendment put forward by my colleague from Columbia River-Revelstoke. I'll also be voting against the throne speech. I support the amendment.

Obviously, the throne speech abandons rural British Columbia. The issue of the minimum wage is actually in the throne speech. It says that now is not the time. The Premier is saying that now is not the time to raise the minimum wage.

Anyway, before I go there, I want to actually thank all of the MLAs who are retiring. I want to thank you on behalf of my constituents and the people of British Columbia for your long years of service to the public. Thank you very much for that.

[1720]

I'm going to be speaking a little quickly because we have a time factor happening here. I want to move on to the comments that were made by my colleague across

the other side, the Minister of Labour, who basically said that raising the minimum wage to \$10 an hour was going to create chaos and that all these jobs were going to be lost and that he was going to do everything in his power to make sure that he protects small business and protects jobs. That's what he said. He's going to protect small business.

Let's find out what kind of ma-and-pa operations he was actually going to protect. Wal-Mart, Canadian Tire, Costco, Best Western hotels, Coast Hotels, etc. — these are the kind of ma-and-pa shops that he's talking about. They're the ones who took out all these ads saying: "Do not raise the minimum wage." These are supposed to be — what? — family-run small business operations? I don't think so.

Folks are looking for a minimum-wage increase. The minister just doesn't get it, and neither does the Liberal government across the way. The throne speech misses the point. It actually misses the point about what real people are saying. I held town hall meetings recently in my constituency — in Tulameen, Merritt, Lillooet, Logan Lake. Before that, I've held meetings in the past in Gold Bridge, Princeton, Merritt and Cache Creek and other areas. Coming up, I'll also be doing some more town hall meetings in Princeton and Lytton as well.

I've got to tell you that at all of these meetings one of the number one issues amongst most of these people was that they were saying: "Raise the minimum wage." These are the lowest-paid workers in the entire province, and this Liberal government for eight years has starved them of wages.

At these town hall meetings there were a lot of issues that came up, and I want to talk about some of them in detail. But I will put on the record what some of those issues were: transportation; rural transportation; health care; environment and water; the Navigable Waters Protection Act; B.C. Hydro rates; independent power production and the privatization of rivers; abandonment of forestry, health, ranching and infrastructure in rural British Columbia by this Liberal government; and the high unemployment rate in communities in the Cariboo — for instance, Williams Lake and Quesnel, which are not in my constituency, but it definitely affects my constituents as well.

I've talked about the minimum wage; homelessness in Logan Lake especially — that whole issue came up; the 2010 Olympics cost overruns, the massive cost overruns by this government; and first nations issues.

Speaking about first nations issues, I want to read something in the record. Actually, it sort of encapsulates what I've been saying for years and years in this House, since back in 2005. This is from today's *Vancouver Sun* — Tuesday, March 31, 2009 — in an article by Shannon Proudfoot. I'm going to quote this into the record, because she says it really well.

"The income gap between aboriginals and other Canadians is so wide, it should trump concerns about other ethnic disparities in this country, a Canadian economist says. 'My way of thinking about it is once you start thinking about ethnic disparity in Canada, you should really only be paying attention to aboriginal people,' says Krishna Pendakur, an economics professor at Simon Fraser University.

"They're an order of magnitude worse off than all other ethnic minorities.' He and his brother Ravi Pendakur, a sociologist at the University of Ottawa, recently completed the largest study of its kind quantifying the exact size of that gap, and the results are stark.

"Those of us who live in Canadian cities have an intuitive awareness that aboriginal people are on average kind of poor,' says Pendakur. 'The thing is that if you then push yourself and ask how poor, you don't really have any answers. We were lacking a quantitative assessment in this area.'

"Using an extensive database from the 2001 census, which includes 20 per cent of all Canadian households and 100 per cent of those on aboriginal reserves, the researchers traced the earnings gap of several segments of the aboriginal population, both on reserves and in cities.

"They looked at aboriginals with registered status living on and off the reserve; those without registered status who still identify themselves as Indian, Métis or Inuit on the census questionnaire; and people who didn't identify themselves as aboriginal but said their ancestors were.

"The incomes of males with registered status living on a reserve is 50 percent lower than that of non-aboriginals, they found, while women in the same category have incomes 21 percent lower than other women. Registered male and female aboriginals living off reserve, meanwhile, have incomes 38 and 23 percent lower than their peers, a disparity that's 'less but still gigantic,' Pendakur says.

[1725]

"Even comparing people who have the same age and the same education level, aboriginal people are, even then, astoundingly poorer,' he says.

"People who claimed aboriginal identity fared better than those with registered status but still much worse than their non-aboriginal counterparts, he found. Even those who simply claim aboriginal ancestry lagged behind.

"With the study taking into account age, education and even location, prejudice is the only explanation left for this gap, says Dan Wilson, senior director of strategic policy and planning with the Assembly of First Nations."

I agree wholeheartedly with the findings and the contents of this study that I just read out, which was in today's *Vancouver Sun*. It is a shame that the reconciliation act that the Liberals wanted to put forward and the new relationship have failed, and this study is proof of that.

I know I have to end my remarks right now, but I want to end it with this. The Premier has decided to cut and run and end this session. We're ready to go right up until April 14, but he's decided to cut and run because he knows he can't stand the heat in the House.

I'll be looking forward to the campaign trail, as will my colleagues, to make sure that we hold this government's feet to the fire and make sure that they're not re-elected — that this New Democrat opposition is on the government side of the House come May 13 and they're relegated to the opposition side.

Thank you very much, and I want to wish everybody a safe journey when they head home.

N. Simons: I just want to offer a few comments on the amendment to the throne speech. I would like to echo some of the words, not all of them, of members who've spoken before me.

I'd like to particularly express my gratitude to those who are working very hard in my constituency on behalf of the people of Powell River–Sunshine Coast. I'm happy to say that our office has been providing advocacy on a number of fronts, which I think has served the population as well as we can. Those are Maggie Hathaway and Kim Tournat. Maggie Hathaway, who is now a city councillor in Powell River, and Kim Tournat on the lower Sunshine Coast do a remarkable job.

I'd also want to thank Anne Paxton, legislative assistant here in Victoria, who has to try to figure out travel arrangements for a person who probably has one of the more complicated travelling schedules and routes among the difficult ones that they have to deal with. So I'd like to thank them.

I'd also like to thank my colleagues on the other side of the House, who I know do their best for their constituents. We have some differences in policy and some differences in opinion and in strategy at times, but I do believe that there's nobody here who is not attempting to do what they believe is right for their constituents. So I just want to raise my hand and thank them for that.

I also would like to thank the Chair of the Select Standing Committee on Children and Youth, who was a gracious Chair while I was Deputy Chair on a committee that was very challenging. That was the first time we've had it here. It reflected the need in this province for an independent oversight over the child welfare system. I believe that independent oversight has proven to be remarkably successful.

There are obviously a number of things that need to improve still. I would love the challenge of being able to do that. We are going to strive to improve the system as best we can.

The issues facing my constituents are troubling. There are problems, obviously, in the forest sector. The community has seen job losses in both the Catalyst mill in Powell River as well as the Howe Sound Pulp and Paper mill on the lower Sunshine Coast.

I think that we need to be extra cautious to ensure that the families affected by this downturn, affected by the forest policy of this government, are looked after, that we mitigate the harm that comes from policy that does not reflect the public interest.

Those are issues for which I am supporting the amendment to the throne speech. I think that we need to make sure that when we talk about the economy and about the need to provide economic opportunities for people, we're actually talking about how we care for our children, how we care for our community, for the seniors in our community.

I think that as much as we can, the policies that we create should be examined in full. If it's about privatization or if it's about education, social services and health issues, we need to make sure that we understand the true impacts of these policies.

I believe that the throne speech falls short in many regards, and unfortunately, I'm not able to support the throne speech. I expect that we will have an opportunity to come back here and be capable of setting the agenda for the future of this province, which is, I believe, a province where the citizens are interested in making sure that nobody's left behind, that we keep British Columbia.... The resources that we have must benefit us. We are capable of looking after each other. I believe that our policies need to reflect that capability.

I'm looking forward to coming back. I've enjoyed this experience. It's been extremely challenging. A lot has happened in the last four years. I lost my father, but my mother is strong. I'd like to thank her for her support and, of course, my partner, Scott Scobbie, a.k.a. country singer Slim Milkie. His career is about to take off.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that you know him. We've had the opportunity to travel together. I thank you for your work in this House as well, as well as the other Speakers, the staff, the Hansard folks who correct the mistakes that I make and all the rest of the people who work in this building. I look forward to coming back.

Hon. I. Chong: Of course, I rise in response to the amendment to the throne speech put forward from the member for Columbia River–Revelstoke. I think it should come as no surprise that I'm disappointed in the amendment and that I won't be supporting it because it's fundamentally flawed. It doesn't really speak to the vision that will allow our province to move forward, to go forward, to have a strong economy. Why would I support an amendment in that nature?

I will, in fact, vote in favour of our throne speech. It's disappointing to hear members rise one after another saying that they can't support a throne speech, because the throne speech, as introduced on February 16, 2009, speaks to the economy. It speaks to what people in our communities are worried about. They're worried about their jobs, they're worried about their families, they're worried about the economy, they're worried about the future, and the throne speech speaks to that.

It speaks to a renewed focus on the economy and jobs. That's one of the reasons why, a day later, there was the introduction of a budget that had \$14 billion of public infrastructure spending.

By voting against the throne speech, members opposite, the NDP, are saying that they do not support \$14 billion of public infrastructure. I'd like them to go back to their communities and ask their mayors why they're putting forward these applications, why their mayors are elected at the community level, why they would not

support roads, why they would not support community centres, why they would not support water and sewer infrastructure, why they would not support jobs in their communities. Because that's what the public infrastructure spending is all about.

I honestly believe.... I hate to suggest that this is what is characterized by the NDP, but they would rather have an economy that's depressed. They would rather see jobs driven out of this province, just like what happened in the '90s, when they were once the government of the day, when they drove young people out of this province. We have spent eight years bringing them back to British Columbia. Why do we want them to leave?

I was here when I saw the previous administration, the NDP, take us to have-not status, credit downgrades. Why do they want to take us back? We're going forward.

Interjections.

Hon. I. Chong: Members want to yell out: "Nonsense." Well, it happened. These are the facts. They're hard to face. They're really hard to face, but you better have a look in the mirror. You better have a look at the record. That's what happened.

What's really disconcerting was that just months ago we had to bring in legislation that said we have to balance our budget, but we couldn't, so we had to bring in two deficit budgets. But in the third year we would bring us back to a balanced budget, because we've done it before and we know we can do it again.

They, in fact, surprised all of us. They stood up, and they said terrible things about it. But they got up, and they supported the legislation. They supported the legislation, and then the very next day they go out, and they want to blow a hole in the budget. Guess what. That will not balance the budget.

[1735]

In fact, they're afraid to bring forth a three-year budget. We're going out into an election. We're going to be out there on the streets. I want them to really tell their constituents: why is it that they can't bring in a three-year budget? Why is it that you only have a one-year budget? Because you cannot balance your budget in three years, yet you voted with us to get us to a balanced budget.

I really wonder why they can't support the throne speech. It's probably because they don't have a plan. They never had a plan. They have no plan going forward.

Not only did they drive jobs out of the province, not only did they create a have-not status, not only did we have credit downgrades. You know what else they did in the 1990s? They doubled the debt from \$17 billion to \$33 billion. I can't believe we watched that happen. British Columbians had to let that happen before their eyes, but what we've been doing consistently, annually, is paying down that operating debt.

We have substantially paid down that operating debt, which is why we are so focused on ensuring that when we balance our budget in three years, we put all those additional resources back on bringing our debt.... We are focused on ensuring that we have a stable economy. We are focused on ensuring that we restore confidence.

That's not what the NDP want to do. That's not what they're after. A strong economy requires leadership. A strong economy requires a vision. A strong economy requires a plan. Well, there's no strong leadership on the NDP, no vision from the NDP, no plan from the NDP, so all they can do is vote against what we have to offer, which is vision, leadership and a plan. I understand the contrast, and I think British Columbians will see that contrast as well.

We can't afford the NDP, because British Columbians know that when that takes place, jobs will be lost. We have already heard inklings of what they intend to do, and that will hurt the small business community. That will drive 50,000 jobs out of British Columbia immediately. If that's what their plan is, to reduce the amount of jobs here, then they might as well say so in their plan, because it's hidden.

We're interested as well in moving forward, in building on the new, green economy, new technologies, and I can see that the NDP once again have no vision, have no plan. The green economy is here. People are looking for sustainable environment. They're looking for leadership, but that NDP have no plan, and they have no leadership.

What do they do instead? They bring in this bond, this James bond, this green bond, but you know, they haven't really explained what it's all about, and even their candidates don't even know what the rate of return is. What kind of confidence is that going to restore in the economy?

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Members, members.

Hon. I. Chong: They have no ideas on the new technologies.

We have been recognized in British Columbia as being leaders in the new clean technology. We have an ICE fund, an innovative clean energy fund, where there are new, emerging technologies looking at our wood waste, to turn that into energy, capturing energy from our waste. We are looking at biofuels, and we have small British Columbia-based businesses that have the technology, that have the will, that have the entrepreneurial spirit to ensure that that happens, and we as a government are there to assist and help and support them.

But what is the NDP's plan for a green new economy? I haven't seen anything, probably because I haven't seen their plan, which again is hidden.

We also have built a very strong relationship, not only with our federal partners in Ottawa, in that they have provided us with the resources to help accelerate our infrastructure spending. We've also built a partnership with our local governments. Imagine that — local governments that each and every one of us are affected by. Your mayors and your councils want to build their economies. They want to build their communities. They want to provide a good quality of life for their citizens.

[1740]

They have put forward ample projects, and we have worked with them, and we have supported them, but what we hear day in and day out is this NDP who vote against any of these proposals. They voted against every budget that brought forward more dollars for local governments, they voted against every budget that brought forward more dollars for health care, and they voted against every budget that brought forward more dollars for education.

I have to ask: if you're against dollars for education, if you're against dollars for health care, and if you're against dollars for local government, what are you for? It sounds like you're for more taxes. That's what it sounds like. Because it sounds like that is what your hidden agenda is — your plan to raise taxes. But you better get that out in the open, because British Columbians expect to know.

What have we done in eight years? Well, I'm proud of our record. We've become the number-one economy in Canada. Even now, with the global situation that we're facing economically, every other jurisdiction is looking to British Columbia as being the one jurisdiction in North America that will come out of this economic downturn fastest and in the best position possible.

Why is that? It's because our eight-year plan has allowed us the room to have the fiscal flexibility. It allows us to have the room to move forward. It has allowed us to have the room to build that confidence to ensure that we, in fact, will be that leader.

We have led in small business entrepreneurship as well. Everyone has said — I've heard it on both sides of the House — that small business is the engine of our economy. Well, we've done very well with small business. We've seen them grow. Between the years 2002 and 2007 our small business rate of growth was double the national average.

Why have they grown? Because we have created a climate that's good for small business. We've reduced taxes. We've streamlined regulations. We've ensured that they can thrive, and we've listened to small business. We've taken some of their recommendations through the small business round table, and we've allowed them to actually grow and hire more people. That's what this is about.

That's what this throne speech is about: jobs, people and a strong economy. The amendment that is being put forward would destroy all of that.

I also want to briefly talk about the Olympics. Interestingly enough, every opportunity the NDP have

had this session — bashing the Olympics. Every chance they can find, talking about it in a negative way. I just want to quote someone from the outside looking in.

This is from Prince Albert of Monaco. He was here yesterday, and you know what he said? He said: "I think what Vancouver and B.C. are doing for these Games is unprecedented." It's not a political statement. It's an observation. He also said: "Everything has been done in a highly sustainable way."

Finally, he said: "Never has an organizing committee of the games prepared so far ahead of time. It's going to have a huge impact." That's Prince Albert of Monaco. He has no vested political interest in our province. I can tell you that. He was impressed, and he's going to walk away — like so many others who have come to British Columbia in the last while to take a look at what we've done — impressed and talk of this province in the highest regard.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Why do we have that? We've got leadership, we've got vision, and we have a plan. I'm prepared. I'm prepared to ensure that we bring that throne speech to fruition after May 12. That's why I'm voting against the amendment on the throne speech.

I appreciate the time that I've been given, and at this time I would move adjournment of the debate.

Hon. I. Chong moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. M. de Jong: I move that the House recess pending the arrival of the Lieutenant-Governor.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the House will be in recess until the arrival of the Lieutenant-Governor.

The committee recessed from 5:45 p.m. to 6:09 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Mr. Speaker: Would the members please take their seats. The Lieutenant-Governor is in the precinct.

[1810]

Royal Assent to Bills

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor entered the chamber and took his seat on the throne.

Clerk of the House:

Police (Police Complaint Commissioner) Amendment Act, 2009

Public Safety and Solicitor General Statutes Amendment Act, 2009

Pension Benefits Standards Amendment Act, 2009
Forest Amendment Act, 2009

In Her Majesty's name, His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor doth assent to these acts.

[1815]

His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor retired from the chamber.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Hon. M. de Jong: I move that the House at its rising do stand adjourned until it appears to the satisfaction of the Speaker, after consultation with the government, that the public interest requires that the House shall meet or until the Speaker may be advised by the government that it is desired to prorogue the fifth session of the 38th parliament of the province of British Columbia. The Speaker may give notice that he is so satisfied or has been so advised, and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and, as the case may be, may transact its business as if it has been duly adjourned to that time and date. In the event of the Speaker being unable to act owing to illness or other cause, the Deputy Speaker shall act in his stead for the purpose of this order.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, before we adjourn, I just want to thank all of you. It's been a very, very interesting four years. I have enjoyed the role as Speaker. By

and large, I think that we've set a very good example for other parliaments across Canada. At least, that's what I get from my colleagues from across Canada. There were days that we tested ourselves, but by and large, I want to thank all of you personally.

I want to also thank all of you on behalf of all the people of British Columbia, because we are now going back to the people of British Columbia, and as we mentioned earlier today, there are a number that have chosen not to come back. We hope that most of you do come back, but certainly, we do know that whatever contribution you've made to the province of British Columbia, all British Columbians appreciate that.

Hon. M. de Jong: In a matter of seconds a few members will leave this chamber for the final time. I hope they do so with pride in the contribution that they have made to public life in British Columbia. The rest of us will go forth and decide who will gather here again after May 12.

Bonne chance, farewell, à la prochaine fois.

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

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until further notice.

The House adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

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