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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
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FIRST SESSION, 39TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2009

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Prayers.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Statements

EFFECTS OF POVERTY

N. Simons: It's good to be here and have the opportunity to speak about an issue that we've all spoken about in this Legislature, including members from the government side of the House. That is the effects of poverty. It's a general topic, and I'm not going to go into too much specifics, because we've all heard the statistics.

[C. Trevena in the chair.]

We all know the numbers, the percentages and the per-capita ratio of the number of children living in poverty and the number of families living in poverty. I can go into the details of the statistics at the risk of eyes glazing over. You know, this topic has been discussed in this House for the past six years, primarily just because of the fact of where British Columbia stands in terms of the rest of the country in our addressing of this important issue.

I do respect the fact that it is obvious that members on both sides of the House do consider poverty to be something that we need to address and that needs to be contemplated in terms of how we conduct our business and engage in creating policy that works for the benefit of everyone.

[1005]

To just start off, if I can, Statistics Canada shows that 13 percent of B.C. residents under 18 live in poverty. That's the highest percentage. This is quoting from the *Province* newspaper from June of this year. You know, 37.4 percent of children in those families were living in poverty compared to 26.6 percent of others.

The problem with citing statistics and talking about percentages and per-capita ratios is that it doesn't actually deal with what we should be talking about, and that's the impacts and the effects of poverty on children in particular. If we can identify those impacts and the effects that poverty has on children in particular who are living in chronic poverty...

I'm not talking about transition poverty or temporary poverty that often afflicts many people in our communities as jobs come and go. I'm talking more about the people living in chronic poverty and the possible deci-

sions that can be made by a clear-thinking government in terms of addressing those.

When we think about children growing up in poverty, we can identify very early in life — if you talk to social workers, if you talk to school teachers or nurses, home care nurses, every one of those individuals will be able to identify to anyone — that these children in particular need a little bit more assistance in order to get through the challenges that they face.

I just want to say that I remember listening to members from the government side who talked about poverty and said that in their mind, yes, in fact they grew up, and sometimes they couldn't afford their music lessons because some other child was taking some athletic activity. That does indicate that there are choices to be made in families.

But the poverty I'm talking about is when there are no choices for moms and dads — for single parents in particular, who represent the highest number of families living in poverty. Something like 60 percent of single parents and children live in poverty in this province. We need to address the fact that there are no choices for these moms and their children.

We know that early intervention can have a significant impact in creating better outcomes, as they call them, for children living in poverty. If we cannot actually create wealth for these families, we need to do what we can to eliminate the negative impacts of the disparity between their lives and their quality of life and their neighbour's quality of life.

So when children go to school, yes, we should be concerned by the fact that they may not have eaten properly before attending. In order to address that, I think we need to say: "Schools should have the ability to provide food to those children who need it."

We mustn't be designing our public policy based on teaching parents a lesson unless we actually address the fact that these children are born into circumstances over which they had very little control. We would be far ahead in terms of addressing the root causes if we eliminate in the minds of these children the idea that living in poverty also means being nourished with unhealthy food — if that's not an oxymoron — having less access to assistance in terms of medical assistance or medical advice, advice from public health nurses or school nurses.

If we eliminate those positions in our communities or the special ed teachers, we create a larger gap, in fact, between those children who are living in poverty and others. The effects are broad and far-reaching. They impact on the costs to our social assistance programs in the long term, to our education systems in a negative way, to our health care system in an unimaginable way, although it has been calculated.

There are statistics that clearly indicate that children who are not provided with the necessities of a healthy life do end up being far more involved in the criminal

justice system, in the health care system, in all the systems that our society sets up as safeguards. We need to try and prevent the children from having to reach the threshold when those safeguards are required.

We can do much more in terms of preventing the effects of poverty or mitigating the effects of poverty while we work on a comprehensive strategy to eliminate poverty. We have the capability in this House, putting the minds of the government members and the opposition members together. If there was a will to do so, I know that this side of the House would be first at the table and raring to go — raring to go.

[1010]

The impacts of poverty on our community are incalculable both in social terms as well as in economic terms. I believe the capacity exists in this room to address these effects.

There was a time when I taught criminology. When I teach criminology, we often talk about the social imbalance that exists in communities and how some people end up disproportionately occupying our jail cells or involving themselves in court.

I'm looking forward to completing my thoughts later.

R. Sultan: It's a great privilege to be able to respond to the remarks of my friend from Powell River–Sunshine Coast on poverty, particularly childhood poverty. Let me begin by agreeing with my friend. Poverty is a terrible thing. It has unfortunate correlates, as he's pointed out, in the health and well-being of our citizens, in the quality of the parenting of our next generation, in the likelihood of citizens finding their way into jail rather than university, and a long list of other discouraging correlates.

So on this we can all agree: poverty is a bad thing, there's too much of it, and it's the duty of every government to try to eliminate it. But from that agreed platform, the opinions begin to diverge on the true extent of poverty, where it most often may be found and what to do about it.

For example, the organization First Call in a press release last year: "B.C.'s Child Poverty Rate Still Worst in Canada for Fifth Consecutive Year..." It was distributed and, along with it, a table showing pre- and post-tax numbers for the proportion of children living in poverty for 54 communities right across British Columbia. The reported source: the impeccable Statistics Canada agency of the federal government.

Now, that First Call press release turned out to be a useful handbill. A week seldom goes by — indeed, maybe, frequently a day doesn't go by — without some member of the opposition standing up and referring to the fact that we have the worst childhood poverty record in all of the country and expressing outrage, outrage that the government doesn't do more to eliminate it.

However, I beg for caution. First of all, Statistics Canada repeatedly emphasizes that it does not attempt to measure childhood poverty. That "childhood poverty" label is not a

label of its own invention. That's a label apparently made up and attached by First Call and eagerly picked up by none other than our friends across the aisle in the NDP.

Secondly, according to First Call, if we rank all of these 54 communities by the degree of childhood poverty, it turns out that my own community of West Vancouver lies in the highest 15 percent poverty rate, among the worst in all of B.C. Well, guess who's at the very top of the list, the lowest childhood poverty rate. It's Powell River, the community represented by the member opposite.

Now, where's all that childhood poverty that they apparently identify in West Vancouver? Well, there are indeed pockets of deep deprivation and need, even in relatively rich West Vancouver, but I'm startled over First Call's findings that we're just about the worst in the entire province. Then I ask: "Well, where did these numbers come from exactly?"

It turns out that what Statistics Canada publishes is an estimated percentage based on the average proportion of income spent on food, shelter and clothing for families of different size and communities of different size, all measured for all of Canada 17 years ago, adjusted for the CPI. If you spend 20 percentage points more than that average, you're called poor. If you have children, they are poor also. If that happens to be your statistical category, well, then First Call — and our friends across the aisle, including the member from the community enjoying the least poverty of all in B.C., it turns out — says your children are living in poverty.

But are they indeed in poverty to the extent of almost one in five in West Vancouver? I'm suspicious of the numbers. It would take an essay on statistical methodology for me to explain my suspicion. However, I decry those who glibly proclaim that when it comes to childhood poverty, B.C. is the worst in all of Canada and West Vancouver is the worst in all of B.C.

[1015]

Madam Speaker, I do not believe it, and those who eagerly shout these slogans simply distract from the genuine issues — there are genuine issues, which are real enough — and the complexities of what to do about it.

N. Simons: I'm glad that the member stood up and made that feeble attempt at saying that everything's fine in the province of B.C., and the cackling of his cohorts on that side of the House does a lot to demonstrate truly where this government believes child poverty exists in this province.

If you use the same statistics across Canada, if you use the same standards across Canada to measure, how is it possible that British Columbia for six years in a row...? We've never heard the government actually speak about denying that that's an actual fact.

This is the first time on record that members of the government have said categorically that they denied those numbers from Statistics Canada. Shame on that

side of the House. Truly, if they understand that this is an issue far beyond these simple statistics, then the member opposite can find his refuge in statistics and use that as a reason for not addressing the issues. That is at the core of this issue: you actually have a cut to services that protect children from difficult circumstances.

You have a cut from services that allow them to succeed in school, to have proper nutrition. These are the impacts that the member opposite pretends to care about — the member for West Vancouver–Capilano. I don't believe that he has actually experienced or seen firsthand in any time of his life what poverty means to children who go to school hungry. Nor does the minister, probably — the Minister of Health, so-called Minister of Health, who thinks this is a joking matter.

Deputy Speaker: Member.

N. Simons: This is about child poverty in the province, Madam Speaker — the highest rate by any standard of measurement.

Sorry. I should point out quite clearly that this has become, in this little brief interlude, a partisan discussion, as a matter of fact, because the government side doesn't believe that there's a problem with child poverty, and this side says that it has to be addressed. They didn't manage to do it in the best of times. I don't expect them to lift a finger in the worst of times, and that's a shame.

Deputy Speaker: Member. Member. Take your seat, Member.

I would like to remind members that this is private members' statements. It is an opportunity to discuss issues among private members.

N. Simons: Thank you for the reminder, Madam Speaker.

Clearly, it is obviously an issue of concern to this side of the House. I wish that now we have an acknowledgment that the government side of the House doesn't believe this to really be an issue, because we're not the worst.... Maybe we're the second worst, which would make things much better, I'm sure, in their minds, because it's better to be second worst than worst. Even they can figure that out.

But the fact of the matter remains that child poverty and the effects of child poverty are having a negative impact on our communities, both socially and economically. If the moral reasons for addressing this issue aren't sufficient, surely in their little calculator minds they can figure out how to actually address this from an economic perspective so that we don't have to spend money trying to allow children in this province to actually have a standard of living that is fair and close to those that we enjoy.

Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind members that these private members' statements are to discuss issues that concern private members.

TACKLING WAIT TIMES IN HEALTH CARE

N. Letnick: In my first statement in this series on health care I argued that Canada's public health care system was never designed to be comprehensive or universal. Now, thanks to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in the Chaoulli case, what is or is not medically necessary is no longer an absolute.

Policy-makers and consumers may now take time to service into account, thereby leaving more public resources available for those with the greatest medical need.

In this second health care instalment I will briefly cover the subject of why wait times for surgery occur, to be followed in the near future, I hope, with a series of policy recommendations for their reduction.

In publicly funded health insurance systems like ours, non-price rationing in the form of wait-lists is used as a means of matching supply and demand. Wait-lists for health services occur if demand outstrips capacity, either demand or capacity is poorly managed, or if there is significant variability in demand.

[1020]

The first two reasons are more easily understood, however challenging as they may be to correct. The third reason, variability in demand, is amplified the closer a health system approaches full-capacity utilization.

If demand temporarily spikes upward, as is the current situation with the H1N1 virus, in most comprehensive, publicly funded health care systems, patients with less urgency are bumped for more urgent cases, and queues are formed. Even in normal times, service providers have an incentive to encourage such queues to persist because they assist the hospital or surgical unit to keep its beds, staff and operating theatres optimally loaded and its unit costs minimized, predictable and on budget.

When administrators have incentives to manage their budget and none to manage their wait-lists, wait-lists suffer, especially in systems like ours where dollars follow the queue and not the patient. As queues increase in length, the number of no-shows increases due to forgetfulness, to patients gaining access to care elsewhere or becoming ineligible candidates due to health deterioration or death. For example, 10 percent of patients booked for ultrasound exams in QEII hospital in Halifax in July 2005 failed to show.

The closer a system functions at full capacity, the more susceptible it is to any variability and expands on wait-lists. Demand can be broken down into four categories: emergency, urgent, non-urgent and discretionary. As patients move between categories, queues are formed in the system. People sometimes will leave the top of one category just to end up at the bottom of another.

Demand is also frequently associated with the progression of slow-moving chronic diseases, especially where there's no standardization threshold for placing someone in the queue in the first place. Given no price signals to manage expectations, varying opinions on the part of physician agents of appropriate indicators for surgery and the potential for some surgeons to be influenced by perverse incentives, it is very likely that demand by those eligible for surgery will outstrip supply.

In addition, with improvements in technology, which determine the range of conditions that are treatable, and improvements in anaesthesiology, which have reduced the risks associated with surgery, medical science has increased both the scope of procedures offered and the range of patients undergoing surgery.

These factors have led to substantial increases in demand for elective procedures, far beyond what would normally be attributable to population growth — both by the middle-aged, who would have previously managed their need, and by the very elderly, for whom there would have otherwise been counter indications for surgery such as the fear of dying through such procedures.

With service delivery improvements resulting in more day cases, OECD countries have experienced dramatic increases in demand for non-urgent procedures such as cataract surgery, hip replacements and coronary artery bypass. While day surgery is beneficial because it reduces the per-unit cost of treatment, it is usually accompanied by an increase in volume, which has the net effect of increasing health care delivery costs, not reducing them or wait-lists.

Indeed, lowering wait times may encourage an increase in demand by those waiting on the sidelines, much like improving road capacity only results in a temporary improvement in traffic conditions as drivers become aware of the increase in supply and get into their cars.

The key point here is that for most economies, increasing spending alone cannot achieve equilibrium in the demand for health services. All aspects of supply, delivery and, yes, demand must be managed if one wants to achieve progress in wait-lists.

The sustainability of the health care system is threatened by unchecked demand, leading politically motivated policy-makers to continually increase the percentage of government revenues allocated to health services at the expense of other important government programs such as affordable housing or services to children or poverty, without realizing any significant increase in the life span of a population or improved perception by the citizens that their health system is not in crisis.

Governments are faced with an inexhaustible supply of surgical patients and a finite level of financial and human resources to tackle them. If, as a result of the Canada Health Act, price signals are not available to control demand, then it will be necessary for governments to institute both demand- and supply-side policies if they

wish to realize a reduction in the use of wait-lists as the balancing factor for the supply-demand equation.

I understand that very long waits can result in significant deterioration of functional status and poor post-operative outcomes, including higher risk of falls, fractures and decline in visual acuity. However, there is little evidence of significant deterioration of health or medical outcomes as a result of waiting for elective surgery where those times are up to three to six months depending on the condition. In many systems, most people do not wait long at all, but the public's perception of wait time is driven by the media, opposition politicians, groups with a pecuniary interest and a very few patient outliers.

[1025]

Society must be aware that by directing resources to tackle wait-lists in one area of health care — for example, the big five of hips and knees, cataract, coronary, diagnostic imaging and cancer care — we limit resources available for reducing wait-lists in other areas such as psychiatry, gastroenterology, anaesthesiology and emergency care.

The good news is that the boomer generation is still a few years away from their peak health-consuming years. So we still have some time to prevent a collapse of our coveted publicly funded health care system. However, government must soon move to end its passive approach to service prioritization and fully engage the public to determine the best use of our scarce resources.

A. Dix: It's a pleasure, of course, to rise and speak on these issues of wait times. I think everybody would agree that wait times in health care is an important priority of government. It should be an important priority of government — that waiting in pain or waiting for care in a general sense leads to worse health outcomes and leads to damage to the economy, as has been shown in a recent Canadian Medical Association report — and has been, indeed, a priority for a long period of time.

I'm a little bit surprised to hear the member talk about the inexhaustible demand for surgery as if anybody — I mean a single person in the province — wants to have surgery. Demand is not inexhaustible for surgery. In fact, most people, if you look at the system, don't want to go to an emergency room, don't want to go to their family doctor and don't want to have surgery. So to suggest that the demand is inexhaustible is, I think, incorrect, or that health care is a commodity like other commodities — or like highway construction — is also, in my view, incorrect.

What do we learn, though, internationally as to where the solutions are? We're going through a period, as the member will know, where, for arbitrary reasons, in the middle of a fiscal year we're dramatically reducing the number of surgeries in health authorities around the province and dramatically reducing the number of diagnostic

tests. This will have an immediate impact on wait-lists. In fact, in virtually every surgical category, perhaps, except hip and knee replacement surgery, the government this year will see a dramatic increase in wait times over the next few months.

So if the member is talking about a planned approach, what we're going through right now and what we're experiencing right now is a bit of an experiment in an unplanned approach to the wait-time question. So what do we learn about how we get at wait times? There are lots of myths out there.

The first myth, I think, is in the development of a parallel private system — that the solutions to wait times are, in fact, to set up a parallel private system to relieve pressure on the public system. Fortunately, this is a much-studied question, and all of the evidence, all of it suggests that the development of a parallel private system increases wait times in the public system. All of that evidence shows the increase in for-profit ownership of facilities, in the profit motive and in the market motive of wait time control.

It leads to two possible conclusions. One is a decline in the quality of care because the overwhelming evidence.... And I'll refer the member — I'll be happy to send it to him — to a review of 149 studies and 20 years' worth of data in the United States which suggests that health outcomes are dramatically better when the care is provided either directly by public hospitals or by non-profit hospitals as a group rather than for-profit hospitals. So outcomes are better.

Finally, I think if the suggestion is — and I think that's where the member is going.... This is a fair debate. It's a fair debate as to the scope of public health care. I think all of the evidence shows that it's investments like in Richmond, like at UBC, like other places — investments in the public system that target specifically long wait times — that are the solutions ultimately to the wait time solution, not an effort to narrow the scope of public health care so that only those who have, get preferred access.

We have a model in Canada which is different than that, which gives priority, in fact, to those who need care based on the assessments of medical professionals. This system has served us well. It has maintained lower administrative costs in our health care system. It is based on the best evidence we have, which is that investment in public health care is the right way to invest wait times, that investment in the creation of a parallel private system will increase wait times in the public system — one.

[1030]

And two, it treats health care not as a commodity like the others, not as a commodity where you suggest that people, if you just offer more, will take more. I think that runs contrary to what we know about health care, which is that for the most part, people want to avoid going to the doctor. People want to avoid going to a hospital. People want to avoid tests.

The suggestion that this growing and unlimited demand is leading to a public that will just jump in and increase wait times when access and surgeries are increased is, I think, contrary not just to all of the empirical evidence and all of the studies that we know but contrary to our own understanding of how individuals act in relation to the health care system.

What do we need to do? Invest in public health care.

N. Letnick: Thank you very much to the member for Vancouver-Kingsway for his comments.

It's not a philosophical debate of private versus public health care. I think we've been at a balance of 70 percent public, 30 percent private in this province for a number of years. We're not looking at that.

The whole debate is that people need the services. More and more people, at a younger and younger age, are getting their hips done, their knees done because, quite frankly, the capacity is there to help them out. Physicians have the ability and the open time to do it, so they're getting it done. People, as they get older, are getting more work done as well.

The big question that I have, because it is a private member's statement, is: are we using our limited resources that we have, paid for by taxpayers, to the best use of everyone?

For the member for Vancouver-Kingsway to criticize the fact that health regions are doing fewer hips and knees as compared to a prior year.... That's not the reason. It's not a matter of budget. It's because they're approaching 90 percent completion in 26 weeks.

Over the past years.... For instance, Interior Health has been ramping up volumes of hip and knee procedures so they can meet a certain target. As their wait times decrease and they get closer to their target, they don't have to do as many procedures as they previously did in order to maintain the levels to the target. That allows them to redirect funds to other areas.

The whole thesis of this argument is that if we need the funds in other priority areas, we should look at channelling them to where it makes the most use. We are a society that has scarcity, and therefore, we should look at that.

As with most complex systems, there is no silver bullet to resolve the issue of wait-lists in publicly funded health care systems. International research has shown that to achieve meaningful reductions, countries or health jurisdictions must employ a series of tools, preferably with the support of the public and clinicians.

European countries have implemented several measures to reduce wait times. They include care guarantees, increasing spending, purchasing services abroad, changing financial incentives and governance models, and introducing private providers.

Evidence has demonstrated that the most effective measures are to change financial incentives for physicians that are fair and that prevent cherry-picking, to

change governance structures and, yes, to use private-funded providers to provide health care.

In my next instalment I will present and describe in greater detail some of the measures taken internationally, nationally and right here in British Columbia to tackle wait-lists and corresponding outcomes.

Notwithstanding the positive evaluations of the public health system by its users, with over 90 percent of Canadians rating the overall quality of care they received from our health care system in 2007 as good or better and 88 percent rating their personal health as good, still 72 percent of Canadians believe that our system requires fundamental change.

Canadians are right once again, and with your indulgence, in my next time I'll have some solutions to what those fundamental changes might be.

BENEFITS OF TRADES AND TRAINING

D. Routley: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the House about the benefits of skilled trades training.

Generally, I think that when people refer to or hear about skilled trades, they assume we're talking about Red Seal trades. There are 45 of those in this country. The Red Seal indicates a stamp of approval or accomplishment that is recognized throughout this country. It allows the greatest degree of labour transport. It ensures quality, and it ensures trades.

The history of our skilled trades is interesting, though. In the distant past, craft organizations historically controlled the entry of skilled people into various industries. Why did we ever invest in this kind of structured form of training? Well, it's to ensure continuity in the various industries that we depend on. It is to ensure that public safety standards are maintained, that efficiency in industries can be achieved and that flexibility of an economy can be maintained. This transportability is essential to a resilient economy and to the resilient lives of workers.

[1035]

The history in this province is one of drastic change over the recent past. Under the NDP government there was the establishment of the Industry Training and Apprenticeship Commission. On that commission, there was equal representation between labour, educators and employers. New trades were certified. Women and visible minorities were encouraged to register, and existing apprenticeships were expanded. Disagreements existed between stakeholders, but the commission worked to consensus and solved those problems, while enrolment steadily rose throughout that time.

After the election of the B.C. Liberal government, the Industrial Training and Apprenticeship commissioners were not invited to participate in the government's review of ITAC, the system for which they were commissioners. Soon after, the government fired those commissioners.

When the new system, the Industry Training Authority, was introduced, there was no input from those stakeholders, other than the employers. The educators and the labour organizations of the province were left out of that consideration. All of the coordinators of the previous system, who helped in student support and helped employers access the right programs, were fired.

The New Zealand model of compartmentalization was adopted. Compartmentalization is a system that allows apprentice workers to complete portions of their apprenticeship in a different order of completion, as it suits them and their employers. This is a flexibility, if it's offered as a means of achieving more flexibility and more completion, that has some merit. In those countries, it has been more successful, unfortunately, than it has been here.

When the current government went to New Zealand to examine this model, they were warned of the basic pitfalls. Those pitfalls were ignoring stakeholders. I've referred to their stakeholders who were ignored in British Columbia under the establishment of the ITA. They were warned about abandonment of student supports. Student supports are essential to the completion of apprenticeships, even support such as child care that allows women to participate. They were warned of the funding....

Deputy Speaker: Member, I'd remind you that this is a private member's statement. The point of private members' statements is to discuss issues relative to private members, not to be partisan.

D. Routley: Absolutely. I'm comparing two systems. The system implemented, the ITA.... Those who implemented it were warned that using this compartmentalization model as a means of reducing funding would be damaging to the system. In fact, it was much more expensive in both New Zealand and Australia to introduce compartmentalization than it was to embrace the previous system. But here in B.C., fortunately, we have a 60-percent-per-capita lower funding model.

It appears that the compartmentalization has, in effect, in British Columbia become a model of dilution of skills. This is a most unfortunate outcome because when we look at our skilled trades, we are examining an area of our economy that is the most vulnerable and the most severely impacted by our aging demography.

We are losing our skilled tradespeople. The skilled tradespeople, going right back to the craft organizations that I referred to in the deep history of skills training, are the mentors who allow this continuity and this continuation of knowledge.

What should this be? Well, any training system should have the clear goals of empowerment, productivity increase, transportability, and aiding in creating a more resilient economy. What it should definitely not be is a disjointed, blind and disempowering organization or system.

That is exactly what our Auditor General pointed to when he examined the current ITA system — that it was a system of chaos, that it disempowered workers and that it did not allow us the clear view of what our labour market needs are and did not allow us to adequately plan.

What it should be is a strong partnership between government, labour and educators, with the clear purpose of creating a resilient economy, giving continuity to people's lives and businesses, success, and also empowering all sorts of British Columbians who otherwise do not have access to more productive and successful lives.

[1040]

I think it behooves anyone who examines skills training to do a couple of things. One is to be very conservative of those mentors who still exist in our workforce and make the most use of them, the best benefit, in achieving those clear goals of empowerment, of good strong partnership and of productivity in transportation.

We call our tradespeople journeymen or journey-persons, and that term refers to the transportability of their skills. We have seen a massive decline, a drastic decline in completions of apprenticeships. We need to reinvest in a strong system.

D. Horne: It's with great pleasure that I stand today and talk about trades and training. Obviously, the member for Nanaimo–North Cowichan has had an interesting view. It's great to talk about the issues around trades and training, because they are extremely important to us in British Columbia — extremely important. We need to look at how to evolve things, how to provide.

I think what these private members' statements are about is talking about ideas, talking about the way for the future, talking about the vision that we may have to improve things — not constantly talking about how things in the past may have not been the best. I think that's how members on all sides should use this time, and I hope that in the future that's how things will move forward.

I will note, before I talk too much about the future, that in this year 2009-2010 we have 47,000 registered apprentices and trainees here in British Columbia, which is triple the number we had in 2000. So we've had significant growth in the amount of apprenticeship training we have.

I would also note that according to Statistics Canada we have 94 percent of apprentices employed, and of those that are employed here in British Columbia, we have 73 percent making more than \$40,000 a year. So we have a solid record of training.

It goes back to other areas and our vision for the future and the importance of trades and training, because there are really two sides to trades and training. Obviously, there's the side of making sure that here in

British Columbia we have a skilled, very trained workforce that can provide employers with the skills they need in order to develop our economy and build businesses here, to be able to provide the services that British Columbians require and need.

I think the other thing we also need to look at that's equally important is the business of education internationally and providing here in British Columbia a place where we develop skills and train people for global businesses and for a global world. That's equally important because the business of education is extremely large — in the trillions of dollars internationally.

By providing very good skills training, very good apprenticeship programs and the best advanced education anywhere in the world, not only do we build a business and build positions and build the economy here in British Columbia, but we also build up the skills and the training and the perceived value of our own people here.

When employers look at where they want to move, where they see the most skilled workforce, where they see the people in the world that they see as being the leaders in that field, they look to British Columbia. I think that's extremely important for us as well.

We need to make sure that not only do we have solid training but basically that we market that solid training to the world. It's very, very important, as well, as we move forward in having that skills training and having the ability to train people from around the world.

The member mentioned the Red Seal program — the importance for training and skills and for the skills that have been acquired here in British Columbia to be recognized globally. Making sure that our programs and our institutions are well recognized globally is extremely important to us to make sure there is the transfer of those trades, the ability for those who are trained in British Columbia to go and use those skills anywhere in the world.

[1045]

A highly motivated and highly mobile workforce is extremely important and is something that will make British Columbia stronger and stronger as the years go on. So I thank the member for bringing this up. This is a very, very important issue.

D. Routley: Thanks to the member for his comments, but I would refer him to the poorly managed renovation project. Someone without adequate training might begin many projects and not complete them, thereby actually reducing the value of what they started with. I think that is exactly what's happened to the apprenticeship training system in B.C.

When the member talks about 47,000 registrations, much more than before.... Well, the government moved the goalposts when recognizing registrations. They now

recognize high school introductory trades-training programs as registered apprentices. They reduced the number of spaces in the public college system so that those seeking apprenticeships in high demand had to register in a multitude of institutions, thereby showing up as multiple registrations. They increased the time that registrations stayed on....

Deputy Speaker: Member, again I'd remind you that it's private members' statements.

D. Routley: Yes, absolutely. I will respond to the member's assertions.

Those registrations now stay on the books for 18 months rather than the one year that they stood before. The number of registrations does not in any way reflect the number of completions.

The member talked about marketing solid training. Well, that's what this province could do in the past when we had the supports necessary to get the completions that were necessary to have that internationally and nationally recognized transportability.

The Auditor General has reviewed this system in its complexity and in detail, and his comments were that we have chaos, that there is a lack of planning, that this commitment is more to providing employers with trainees who they will not have to release. This is what has happened under the compartmentalization system.

I would use the Quebec example, where they did not disinvest in supports for students. In fact, child care provided in the province of Quebec has been directly linked to the fact that they have the highest participation of women in skilled trades.

We have disinvested in both our apprenticeship training system and our child care system — not only that student support but direct student support, the counsellors who would work with students who weren't being released by employers and who would work with employers to find ways to do that without harming the employers' business model. Those counsellors were essential to arriving at the completions.

We can register as many as we want, and we can change the grounds and recognition of what a registration is, but if we don't act in the public interest, we will fail our students and our economy.

EXPANDING TRADE WITH CHINA

H. Bloy: It's my pleasure to be able to stand up in the House today in private members' time. I want to talk about what many people are now calling the Pacific century. It is a safe bet that it will be, considering that the Asia-Pacific region has more than a third of the world's population and a combined market of \$10 trillion. The numbers get bigger and bigger as the world moves faster in economies joining together.

Of all the dynamic countries in Asia enjoying rapid economic growth and development, one stands out, and that is China — not to take away from the growth of Japan and Korea. China has modernized over the past 30 years at a pace that's nothing less than extraordinary, and their rate of economic growth continues to be phenomenal.

Earlier this year when I was talking to the consul general of China to B.C., he was talking about their disappointment at an 8.7 rate of growth this year. His disappointment was that they weren't in double digits, but he claims that they will be back there again next year.

The rapid growth of many Asian economies presents great opportunities for growing our own economy and diversifying into these markets. This growth creates many jobs for British Columbians, because I personally believe that in the business world today and the economy there are no borders.

[1050]

Today I want to focus on China and its growth in North America. When we look at British Columbia in the Pacific century, we enjoy a number of advantages. Prince Rupert and Vancouver are two days closer to the market or more. We are closer than Los Angeles and the west coast. We can move traffic by train to Chicago in the Mideast and to the rest of Canada. We are truly the Pacific gateway. It's important for doing business with China and Asia.

The population in British Columbia needs residents from Asia to come here and help us grow for all of Canada, but especially it's the Asian population from China that we've welcomed, and they've come from all over the world to join us. They're well educated; they're hard-working; they're extremely entrepreneurial people. They come multilingual — many, many languages and the dialects of Mandarin and Cantonese from China. They come here. They speak English, French and sometimes many other languages. We need these people coming here to help us grow these connections.

You know, I'm proud. I just came back from China a few weeks ago. I travelled with the B.C.-Canada business delegation made up of many hard-working Canadians of Asian heritage — proud to call British Columbia home but proud to do business around the world. It's amazing, this group. I was proud to be a leader of the delegation, along with my colleague from Burnaby North.

There are a number of people I want to mention because they all contribute to the factor of life and to business and culture as we know it in Vancouver, and their contributions are amazing to our province in what they bring from China.

We had James Ho as leader; Pius Chan as deputy leader; Albert Fok, deputy leader; Teresa Wat, secretary general; and Tianhanei Lee, coordinator.

Other delegation members: Joe Che, director of Stone Gallery; Ian Cheng, president, Sino CanAm Education and Technology Society; Michael Eng, president, Light Vision Media Network; Kelei Fang, executive secretary, New Asia Capital Consultants; Dickson Heng, marketing director, North American Fortune International Investment and Trading Group; Virginia Kuok, controller, Celtek Holdings Ltd.; Geoffrey Leung, president, Celtek Holdings Ltd.; Mr. Li, co-chair, ITM International Top Model Corp.; Alex Li, president, Start-up Immigrant Services; Michael Ng, director, Vancouver Chinatown Business Improvement Area Society; Ken Ta, director, TK Investment; Agnes Wong, vice-president, Vancouver Chinatown Business Improvement Area Society; Hans Wong, president, Hans Wong Realty Ltd.; Mr. Zhang, general manager, Canada China Culture Exchange.

It is important for British Columbians and for the province of British Columbia to be exploring business opportunities from around the world. To be part of this group.... One of our main parts — we visited the China-ASEAN world business expo, and I found it just amazing, the size and the scope of business opportunities that were offered there. I see the opportunities for many British Columbian companies to do business in China. I also see the opportunity for our government to have a display booth at this show in the future.

There are many trade delegations that leave British Columbia. Just this past week our Minister of Forests and Range was in China and Japan. One number.... I spoke with him earlier this morning, and I said to him: "I read in the press release that you did 1.5 billion board feet of lumber."

Deputy Speaker: Member, this is private members' statements, please. I'd like to remind you.

H. Bloy: Thank you. Okay.

We talked about 1.5 billion and what it can do to create jobs, but I couldn't relate to 1.5 billion board feet. That happens to be the equivalent of six sawmills in British Columbia, you know, working full out, hiring 250 people in the mill and 250 people in the bush.

[1055]

This is private members' statements, I agree. I was just trying to show an example of opportunities that happen for trade around the world. I'm a strong supporter of building relationships around the world.

I was involved in the twinning of Paju, Korea, and the city of Coquitlam in British Columbia. Within months they had one business deal put together. It was for lighting technology that this company from Paju is installing in Coquitlam and in New Westminster.

As it expands and passes North American tests, the hope is that they will set up a distribution outlet in British Columbia. This was brought on by the hard work of a lot of British Columbians — again, Charles Kim of Trans-

Pac Fibre and the Canada-Korea Business Association in one.

J. Kwan: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Burnaby-Lougheed. Indeed, China has become an economic giant in the world economy. There's no mistake about it.

The member mentioned that 35 years ago, who would have known that in fact, the changes would be occurring as they have? In thinking back 35 years ago, what did governments previously do to try to tap into and foresee potential opportunities into the future in terms of trade and development?

As it happens, Madam Speaker, 35 years ago the former Premier of British Columbia Dave Barrett brought the first delegation to China from British Columbia — first delegation ever in British Columbia. He led a delegation to visit China — the first Premier to do so.

The former Premier, Premier Barrett, had done this after he won the majority of government in 1972. At that time, people will recall, China was just attempting to open up to the western community through the years of the Cold War. But at that time Premier Barrett had the foresight to anticipate into the future, to begin to build relationships and to recognize the natural opportunities that we already have in terms of the natural advantages that we have with China.

First of all, in British Columbia we have a significant number of immigrants from China, particularly from Guangdong province. We also have the language, with the number of immigrants who are from China having the natural language connection because we spoke the same languages. We also have the cultural understanding, the cross-cultural understanding, and then we're looking forward to building those relationships into the future.

Last but not least, of course, we have the geographic location as well. We are the gateway because we are situated here in British Columbia where we are. We are the gateway to China.

Premier Barrett foresaw all of those advantages and took that trip. It wasn't actually very popular to do so back 35 years ago — unlike today, where it is very popular and virtually every government every year leads delegations to China. But 35 years ago you needed foresight to do that, and Premier Dave Barrett did exactly that.

Deputy Speaker: Member, I'd just like to remind you, similarly to the member who led the statement, that this is private members' statements, and to try to just talk about private members' issues rather than partisan.

J. Kwan: Sure.

Well, in terms of the history, I thought it was important to mention it, because 35 years later, in terms

of where we are today, in establishing a relationship, to build on that relationship, we need to examine the history of where that relationship came from. Part of that relationship is people taking initiative and moving forward with it.

Of course, Premier Barrett wasn't the only one. Subsequent governments did so as well. Subsequent leaders did so as well. Coming to mind is another former leader, which of course is Mike Harcourt, who actually twinned the province of British Columbia with Guangdong province, again because of that relationship, because of the people.

A lot of the immigrants in British Columbia come from the province of Guangdong. In building that relationship, we actually have a lasting opportunity for British Columbia to continue on ensuring that we have economic advantages.

[1100]

We'll recall the other work that's been done in terms of trying to promote British Columbia with China and build relations. We often talk about Beijing and the big cities, but Shandong province, which has the second-largest growth in terms of GDP in China, is another opportunity there.

A couple summers ago we, the opposition, worked with Shandong Satellite TV to actually do a series of TV productions in promoting British Columbia to the rest of the world and to also ensure that we market our agricultural products and know-how to China. That was a major initiative, and we managed to showcase British Columbia to over seven billion people right in their own homes because of that relationship and the work that was done in building that relationship with Shandong Satellite TV.

We have other opportunities, as well, with the Chinese community. Foreign students are another economic driver, really, for British Columbia, not from China alone but also from other countries. In building that relationship, we will benefit and so too will the other countries.

H. Bloy: I'd like to thank the speaker from Vancouver-Mount Pleasant for her remarks. If it wasn't for the past, we could never go forward. We always have to look back where we've come from, and we have to be able to make decisions in which to move forward. I'm in total agreement with that.

Nothing is done in isolation. The world doesn't work in isolation any longer. You know, the world has to knock down these borders that we have. The world has to move ahead to be able to do business. At one time governments only wanted to say: "We only want to sell. We don't want to buy anything from around the world. We only want to sell." But that doesn't work anymore in this world. We have to be able to buy and sell. It doesn't matter which way business goes, that country will do

business. It'll create jobs. It'll create the economy. It'll pay taxes.

Even on our own benches, we have the member for Coquitlam-Burke Mountain who, in his past life, has helped design a number of sites. His company has designed the General Motors site for the Shanghai World Expo that'll happen in 2010, and he's been involved around the world in business. So there are many people that we have to look forward to and that we can learn from.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

We as a government have to move forward. We want to be the trade and investment partner in the Asia-Pacific region. We want British Columbia to be the destination of choice for business and for tourism. We want to be able to show off the highly educated and multilingual society that we have here. We want to be able to have a world supply chain and a gateway of infrastructure to have the capacity. Our Minister of Transportation has done that, providing the south perimeter road, which is surely the gateway of goods to the rest of Canada and North America.

Our government has developed a number of trade representatives in China, in Japan and in Korea. It's a part of our growth. I've been involved in twinning, as I mentioned earlier. They're extremely successful, but they take a lot of work. There's a different way of doing business when you deal with certain countries around the world. They all have their own culture and their own way of how they do business. It takes a while for North Americans, Canadians and British Columbians, to learn how to do business, but it's to our benefit.

I spoke earlier about the good news that we had about the Minister of Forests and Range just coming back from China and Japan.

I want to say that I've had the opportunity to visit Asia on, I guess, eight different occasions now. I'm truly amazed each time I go at their growth and how they can build new areas and new cities and how they want to deal with all of North America. I've been happy, you know, to work on the twinning with the...

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Member.

H. Bloy: Thank you for the opportunity.

Hon. G. Abbott: I call private members' Motion 17.

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 17 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

Private Members' Motions

MOTION 17 — GREEN JOBS AND LOW-CARBON ECONOMY FOR B.C.

R. Fleming: I move:

[Be it resolved that this House debate and discuss green jobs and the low-carbon economy both of which are essential to the future economic and ecological well-being of British Columbia.]

I'm pleased to call this motion for debate this morning to allow members of both parties of the House to discuss an issue that for many decades was wrongly framed in this province and in the world by economists and by interest groups as being about jobs versus the environment.

[1105]

Today, with few exceptions, most people — and I would include in this definition of "people" mainstream economists — understand that the creation of good-paying jobs and a prosperous economy are directly related to environmental sustainability and taking action to reverse and mitigate climate change.

[L. Reid in the chair.]

Two weeks ago TD Economics released an interesting report on exactly this point. It built a case for B.C. and Canada based on the work of former World Bank economist Nicholas Stern that a changed but prosperous lifestyle can, in fact, only continue by taking action on climate.

British Columbia is a subnational player within Canada in the run-up to December's Copenhagen UN world summit, but like everyone else, whether in the industrialized or the developing parts of the world, we have a shared economic and ecological interest in a successful agreement with science-based targets and binding cuts to global greenhouse gas emissions.

The most serious and well-documented failure of the 20th century market economy was its treatment of the atmosphere as a cost-free dumping ground. There simply isn't another century left to continue runaway carbon-based economic growth like that.

Today the world's attention is urgently focused on reversing the warming of our planet, and our economies, to varying degrees of earnestness, are developing alternatives to burning finite fossil fuel reserves. The risks of not doing this are huge. A rise in planetary temperature of 2 to 4 degrees Celsius will bring things like severe droughts, flooding, water and food shortages, masses of climate refugees, political instability and failed states.

While scientists and policy leaders have pushed and pulled across two decades with political setbacks along the way in order to build a UN climate change consensus, many leading economies, in the absence of agreements that were successful, recognized that there was a com-

ing obligation to meet steep greenhouse gas emission cuts, and they made huge investments in greening their economies.

Even countries like Canada, that are distinguished in the wrong sort of way on meeting international climate agreements, boast of business leaders, research and technology innovators and other early adopters of the green economy. In fact, there are some notable examples where Canada has actually exported our greenest human capital. Over the past 15 years, Germany has built its massive clean tech and solar sectors with Canadian know-how, finance and personnel.

But even in the absence of a sustained and sophisticated green economic set of policies, programs and incentives in Canada, our green economy is still formidable and growing. Green jobs today in Canada are growing at more than twice the rate of traditional jobs — a 9.1 percent increase in employment in the green economic sectors over the last decade compared with an average employment growth of 3.7 percent.

In 2008, it's estimated that there were 530,000 jobs in Canada related to the environment, and it's predicted to grow by 8.8 percent in the next five years. Vancouver's mayor, Gregor Robertson, in outlining his greenest city plan, anticipates the creation of 20,000 new green jobs by 2020 in the city of Vancouver. It's focused on brown-field sites around False Creek which will be envisioned as new green employment hubs.

Some of B.C.'s current jobs include mechanical CAD designers, fabrication workers, sheet metal workers and construction trades. It's employment generated by private and public investment in sustainable projects across sectors.

Skilled trades are a critical part of the green economy. Green energy and construction projects create new careers in manufacturing, construction, operation and maintenance of projects such as wind turbine farms, building retrofits, solar panel installations and transit line building. The green economy is creating new national certifications for people who control, report and verify greenhouse gas emissions, like the GHG professional designation.

[1110]

Canada and B.C. are being helped enormously by the complete sea change in political attitude to climate action and regulation by our largest trading partner to the south. When President Barack Obama allocated close to \$100 billion as part of an economic stimulus package for environmental and sustainable energy projects, it sent a huge opportunity signal to green industries in Canada.

Madam Speaker, let me speak again about green construction jobs and retrofitting buildings. According to the IPCC, the international panel on climate change — and we have a number of Nobel Prize winners just up the road here at UVic.... The IPCC states that retrofitting

and replacing obsolete equipment and buildings has the largest potential for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases by 2030. Buildings account for 14 percent of B.C.'s total emissions.

Again, let me use Germany as an example in this regard. From 2001 to '05 they retrofitted 324,000 apartments with new roof insulation, windows, walls, advanced heating and ventilation systems and the installation of renewable energy equipment. They undertook this massive effort beginning in 2001 when that country had fallen into a severe recession.

If B.C. Hydro is to meet its 50 percent electricity conservation target and British Columbia its 33 percent GHG emission reduction target, we need similarly ambitious, actionable programs. The modest ones that we briefly had, like LiveSmart, have been wound down, apparently because that's what you conventionally do during a recession.

I would argue differently. An economic downturn like the one we are currently experiencing, with the largest job losses being experienced in the construction sector, is an ideal time for B.C. to ramp up our energy conservation and retrofits in this important sector of our green economy.

There are 1.7 million private dwelling units in B.C. We could set targets to expand the reach of LiveSmart or another similar program to approximately 100,000 buildings per year over the next 20 years.

Let me conclude by saying this. Green jobs must mean decent work, and decent work is what working families in British Columbia aspire to have for their own opportunities, for their incomes, for their rights in the workplace, and for their family stability, their dignity and personal development. In fact, decent work is central to efforts to reduce poverty and to achieve a more inclusive, sustainable economy. That is precisely the promise that a stronger, greener and more sustainable economy offers our province.

J. McIntyre: I rise to speak to Motion 17, put forward by the opposition member for Victoria–Swan Lake, as the subject matter is near and dear to the heart of this government.

In fact, I must admit I was most surprised that the opposition would be talking in support of a low-carbon economy when they have consistently tried to thwart every initiative and piece of legislation that we've introduced to actually help us meet that very objective.

For example, the NDP have opposed our measures on low-carbon fuel requirements and our clean energy projects such as run-of-the-river, wind power and biomass. Further, despite the NDP's claim to support a cap-and-trade system, they voted against the legislation right here in 2008.

Their Axe the Carbon Tax campaign, which they took such pride in, actually backfired in the recent provincial

election when many genuinely green supporters who previously voted NDP reared up and resoundingly rejected their politically expedient tactics. Tzeborah Berman, a renowned B.C. environmentalist, in the *Vancouver Sun* on April 18, 2009, stated: "You" — meaning the Leader of the Opposition of the NDP — "have put politicking before the planet in the most hypocritical fashion."

Perhaps with this motion, we can conclude that the NDP are finally coming around to our thinking, in recognition of the importance of moving to a low-carbon economy — a low-carbon economy where we can attract major research and investment to B.C., creating green jobs and creating the very decent jobs that the member before me spoke about.

Let me now turn to our government's record on this issue, because we've been leading the way on climate change initiatives. So let me count the ways. We're the first government in North America to legislate emission targets — 33 percent by 2020 from 2007 levels — with two interim targets to guide us there. Our revenue-neutral carbon tax was also a first in North America.

We've been the first to commit to a carbon-neutral public service by the end of 2010. We have new tailpipe standards designed to eliminate one million tonnes of GHG emissions annually by 2016. That's the equivalent of taking 233,000 vehicles off the road.

We have new renewable fuel standards, 5 percent average, for diesel and gasoline. We have an energy plan, as the member before me said, that calls for 50 percent conservation and electricity self-sufficiency by 2016 so that we can minimize our reliance on dirtier imports, which the NDP seem to think is the way to go rather than permitting the production of green power right here in British Columbia.

[1115]

This is not just talk about the low-carbon economy. This is walking the talk.

Now I'd like to touch on the creation of green jobs, decent jobs, a little bit. Again, we're leading the charge. Our government has been funding research and innovation and supporting the development of cutting-edge green technology right here in B.C. Our clean tech sector is growing at an annual rate of over 10 percent and includes over 250 companies employing 3,700 people.

Innovative clean energy fund. It has already approved almost \$50 million in investments for 34 projects around B.C., including the rural communities. It represents a total value of over \$174 million to develop clean and renewable energy technologies and, most importantly, to create jobs.

We have a \$35 million bioenergy strategy that uses wood waste and trees ravaged by mountain pine beetle to generate new, clean electricity that creates jobs and opportunities for families in forest-dependent areas. We are now using fibre to create new low-carbon cellulose ethanol. We have created new jobs producing wood

pellets, one of the fastest-growing value-added export opportunities for our province.

We are creating a thousand jobs in rural areas that help to drive economic opportunity for first nations with B.C. Hydro's electric purchase agreements with IPPs, with the independent producers. We've got 27 projects that have come on line since we took office in 2001, despite the NDP trying to shut the industry down.

We have hundreds of green jobs in the life sciences area, one of the fastest-growing biotech centres, with 90 companies attracting and putting our best and brightest minds to work here in B.C. We're funding research through Genome B.C. that contributes to green economy and clean technology. We're developing pesticide-free crops, converting dead trees to liquid biofuels.

We have green jobs in our successful film industry, one of North America's busiest centres, just behind L.A. and New York. It contributes a billion dollars annually to the B.C. economy — 20,000 direct and 15,000 indirect jobs — and now new media is burgeoning with 1,100 companies, 16,000 people. A shining example of the merging of the green economy and new media is the creation of Mingleverse Labs, a chat room for executives in Vancouver that reduces travel and is inexpensive.

We're proud of our government's record on this front, and we welcome the opportunity the opposition afforded us today to communicate and celebrate our successes in moving to a low-carbon economy.

L. Popham: I am excited to speak on this motion. The need to move towards the green economy and a low-carbon economy are reasons why I was enticed into politics. In a perfect world, a world that was balanced and fair, we would all be looking through a lens of sustainability before we made any decisions. The environment, the economy and our society would all be considered at all times equal.

Investing in technology and supporting industry that allows a transition into green, low-carbon economies is crucial. One of the most interesting and exciting turns of events due to the awareness of climate change is the return to the belief that local, sustainable food production is a tool we can use to ready ourselves for the climate change battle.

In response to the member across the way, the NDP has always been a true supporter of local agriculture, whereas the current government has shown less support for agriculture than at any time in B.C.'s history.

There is no doubt about it. Agriculture is a major contributor to our climate change demise. Non-sustainable agriculture practices are a threat to our clean water and a driver in deforestation and the loss of biodiversity. The chemicals used are not only a threat to our environment, but a threat to our own health.

These non-sustainable practices are now being targeted for more than their harm to the environment and

our health, though. It is clear that modern-day agriculture is also harmful to our economy.

Worldwide we see centralized food production being the blight of farmers: hectares and hectares scarring the landscape with monocrops that are moved into centralized processing facilities; kilometres and kilometres of feedlots filled with suffering livestock, only to be moved into a corporate, automated slaughterhouse.

The profits for the foods produced in this manner are unevenly distributed to agri-corporations like Monsanto. The farmers who work the land are paid minimally, and the jobs that our proud farmers used to do are being automated. These scenarios prove to be a disaster for our ecology but, more so, devastating for our world's farmers. They are losing their workplace, and we are losing an important part of our local economies around the world.

[1120]

We have approximately 1.3 billion farmers in the global agriculture industry. Deteriorating prices for their goods have moved food producers into a marginal existence. This global reflection on the poor state of agriculture support and the new resurgence for the support of local, sustainable organic food production is amazing.

Sustainable organic agriculture is a huge player in the new green, low-carbon economy. Research shows that organically managed soils can store more than 1,000 pounds of carbon per acre while non-organic systems can cause carbon loss. For consumers, this means that the simple act of buying organic products can help reduce global climate change.

In Canada we see organic farming as one of the fastest-growing sectors within the agricultural industry. We see the public catching on and supporting this new green economy. In 2006 sales worldwide have reached over \$100 billion for organic produce.

This industry is interesting compared to other modern ways of doing business. Instead of moving towards less labour intensity, this industry is moving towards more labour-intensive. There is an incredible potential for a growing source of green employment. In fact, organic sustainable farms employ more than one-third more workers than conventional farms.

There has been a backlash in the past regarding the price of organic products. In fact, organic products more closely reflect the cost of production, which is more important in a local economy. We have more and more people in this world, and we need more opportunities for green employment. Sustainable agriculture is one of these opportunities.

In this age of carbon awareness, farmers should be well-supported for innovative stewardship that builds soil for future generations. Farmers should be recognized for the new role in the green economy.

My friend in Saanich South is an excellent example of agriculture and the new green economy. She farms in

suburbia. She has three-quarters of an acre. She employs numerous workers over the growing season. She sells her beautiful produce to the local market, supplying healthy food with little cost to the environment. She has a wait-list for her products. She's a farmer. She's 40 years old. She's a girl. She farms in a neighbourhood, and she makes \$50,000 a year. I'm proud of that, and that's a big player in the green economy.

R. Howard: I am pleased to rise to speak to this motion, speaking to essential components of the future economic and ecological well-being of this province being green jobs and the low-carbon economy.

This government, the Premier in particular, is being recognized internationally for leadership in tackling climate change, for leadership in creating a green economy, for leadership in managing our carbon footprint. So it is heartwarming indeed to hear both sides of this House recognizing the importance of these initiatives and recognizing this leadership.

These important leadership initiatives include becoming the first government in North America to legislate emissions reduction targets. B.C.'s climate action plan enshrines our emission reduction targets in legislation — a 33 percent reduction in emissions by 2020.

A critical component to achieving our greenhouse gas emission targets is the revenue-neutral carbon tax, the first in North America. Revenue-neutral carbon tax encourages individuals and businesses to make more environmentally responsible choices, reducing their use of fossil fuels and related emissions.

Also, the province is the first government in North America to commit to a carbon-neutral public service. By the end of 2020, schools, hospitals and government buildings will be carbon-neutral facilities. As a further demonstration of leadership, under the climate action charter offered by the province, led by the province, 176 municipalities have made the commitment to be carbon-neutral by 2012.

There are many other initiatives, but I would also like to address just a few economic opportunities. B.C.'s clean technology sector includes over 250 companies employing over 3,700 people, and they're growing at an annual rate of 11 percent. This represents a unique and significant opportunity for new businesses in B.C., for new business start-up and for small and large business diversification.

B.C. entrepreneurs are already demonstrating the creativity and innovation that will lead us successfully into a growing and diversified economy — jobs for us, jobs for our children and jobs for their children.

[1125]

There are examples everywhere, but I will speak to just one example in my city of Richmond, a local technology company working with city staff. The company has developed superconductive ceramic rods. They will

transfer heat from the earth up to the surface to melt snow and ice built up on sidewalks. A simple concept made more efficient by creative and innovative individuals and technology advances and also — important to recognize this — made possible by an environment of low taxes and less red tape, created by this government.

This government has set the table for companies like this to succeed, to grow, to provide jobs. As a small business person myself, I well recognize this and well appreciate this, because it has not always been this way. Also, many initiatives are part of B.C. being recognized as the third-largest clean technology cluster in the world. Our companies are leading innovation on clean forms of electricity, alternative fuels, energy conservation and better managing our forests to cut our carbon pollution from the atmosphere.

This is very important. In fact, I had the good fortune to sit on the city of Richmond's economic advisory task force, and the task force recognized the value of these clusters. They establish a critical mass and attract other businesses, other innovators who want to set up shop close to others in similar competing or complementary companies.

Having companies in proximity creates a learning environment that makes it easier on the supply chain and the distribution chain and can provide better opportunities to develop markets, and it is easier to attract capital and investment and makes it easier to attract a skilled workforce.

In closing, this government has created a business environment, from tax reductions both personal and corporate to red tape reductions to strategic investments that have us enjoying success now and poised for even greater success in the future.

J. Horgan: It's a pleasure to rise today and support the motion brought forward by my colleague for Victoria–Swan Lake looking at the future economic and ecological well-being of British Columbia. I want to touch on a couple of issues, two in my constituency and a third in the Peace River country that just this week my colleague for Surrey–Whalley and I visited: the Spectra Energy injector plant just outside of Chetwynd.

I was amazed at the work that Spectra is doing to try and reduce its carbon footprint. The natural gas sector, as all members of this House should know, is driving our economy right now in terms of revenue to the Crown. Were it not for natural gas, we wouldn't be having the modest improvements that we have seen in our education and health care sectors, and I think that that industry quite rightly is on the vanguard of moving to a low-carbon economy.

If we are going to survive, we need to reduce our emissions, and to see Spectra, particularly with their work here in British Columbia, heading in that direction is a very positive sign. But that's on the broader industrial scale.

I'd like to talk now, if I could, about two examples in my own constituency of small-scale local involvement in the

ecological economy. The first would be — and I've talked about this in the House in the past — the solar panel project at the T'Sou-ke First Nation in my constituency.

My colleague the Aboriginal Affairs Minister and I were delighted to attend a seminar in Sooke where the T'Sou-ke Nation highlighted and showed off the work they've been doing with photovoltaic energy production on their reserve, not just on their administration buildings but now on every single house on the reserve. They will be installing photovoltaic panels, and that's led to job creation on the reserve. That's led to a reduction in energy costs and a reduction of their carbon footprint.

The challenge from a public policy perspective is some confusion around what's called the feed-in tariff at B.C. Hydro whereby the T'Sou-ke Nation and others who are generating electricity or producing electricity in their home or in their business feed that energy back into the grid at a price that should be, in my opinion — and I think I'd get support from most people in the place — above the existing tariffs for industrial and commercial use. So the T'Sou-ke Nation is on the vanguard in terms of their residential work and their administrative work.

[1130]

There's also a family in my constituency, Gord and Ann Baird, who created the first building code-approved cob house in the community of Highlands. It's a fantastic undertaking. They stamped the cob themselves. They made the walls. They've got geothermal heat. They've got photovoltaic water heating. They've also got a living roof.

The challenge we have in terms of public policy — to bring us back to the intent of my colleague from Victoria–Swan Lake — is what can we do as legislators to enhance and improve and accelerate the greening of our economy, particularly here on the lower Island and in the Lower Mainland, where the densities provide opportunities for us.

We've talked about the LiveSmart program that was cut down in the prime of its life because of budget cut-backs — again, an example of a successful program going the way of the dodo because it was so successful. I think we need to revisit, as quickly as possible, the LiveSmart program so that we can have existing retrofits. We also need to change the building code so that new construction, whether it be commercial or residential, is driven and guided by the policies and the instruments of carbon reduction that we're all aware of and that we've talked about in this House.

Feed-in tariff; commercial and residential retrofits; and changing the building code so that we can have discounts for builders who use living roof systems, geothermal heating and cooling, and solar panels in their construction — these are modest steps in the right direction.

I think the challenge that we have as legislators is to try and address these in a non-partisan way. I know my friend from Whistler bristles at the prospect of sharing

ideas across the floor, but I think that if she takes the time to pause on what everyone's saying in the House today, she'll also recognize that if we're working together to improve our communities, to improve our economy and to improve our ecology, our voters will all be the better for it, as will we.

T. Lake: I am pleased to rise today to support Motion 17, put forth by the member for Victoria–Swan Lake to discuss and debate green jobs in a low-carbon economy. I congratulate all members of the House for taking up this debate and doing it from a non-partisan viewpoint, because I think we're all in this together. We may disagree on how to get there, but I think we all know where we need to go in today's environment.

It's appropriate to be talking about innovation around the world in the green economy as our Prime Minister is in India today. Just a short anecdote from Thomas Friedman's columns. Of course, Thomas Friedman, the author of *Hot, Flat and Crowded*, talks a lot about the green industry and how the economy in the western world needs to catch up. Talking about driving around in New Delhi in India, seeing the U.S. embassy with a roof full of antennae and listening gear, whereas the Chinese embassy had solar hot water heaters on the top — that's the kind of stark contrast that we sometimes see, and we have to make up.

I'm happy to report that the British Columbia Lottery Corporation in my home town of Kamloops has solar panels on its roof. Of course, the new Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre has a living, green roof as well. So we are getting there, but we always can do more.

The member for Victoria–Swan Lake said that the current market approach has failed and that the environment has been a cost-free dumping ground. I think that that is being recognized more and more. We haven't really taken the true costs into account when looking at business plans for what we do in this world. I think it's universally agreed by economists around the world who look at the environmental question that we have to put a price on carbon so that the environment does not become a cost-free dumping ground.

That's why I'm very proud to be part of this government, which has enacted the first revenue-neutral carbon tax in North America. I'm hopeful that all members of the House will support wholeheartedly this initiative and the difference that it will make to our future generations.

I want to speak to what's going on in my own community in terms of sustainability — environmental sustainability, particularly. The member for Saanich South talked about agriculture. I share some of her concerns about agriculture and the need to reduce the carbon footprint and also to think about some of the social responsibilities we have about the way our food is raised.

[1135]

At Thompson Rivers University, the chair of beef sustainability, Dr. John Church, is working on a project to promote the use of grass-fed beef, local beef, looking at the composition of the meat from such beef and looking at its increased levels of conjugated linoleic acid and other omega fatty acids, which carry with them some health benefits, not only supporting local agriculture but also doing it in a way that makes us healthier as well.

I also want to talk about the number of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design buildings in the city of Kamloops, where we have, at last count, 13 such LEED buildings, including many of our municipal infrastructure but provincial infrastructure and private buildings as well.

Recently the Canadian Home Builders Association Central Interior held a seminar on building green and attracted over 60 builders in the city of Kamloops. The Kamloops Indian band has a very successful subdivision called Sun Rivers. It was the first subdivision in Canada to rely totally on geothermal heating and cooling, and now over 2,500 people make that community home.

While we like to have these programs like LiveSmart and would love to put money into all of these things which we know are good, I think we always have to take a balanced approach and remember that sustainability is allowing future generations to live in a way in which we like to live. That means not only from an environmental point of view and a social point of view but an economic point of view.

Whenever we talk about these initiatives, we do have to be fiscally responsible and make decisions that are sustainable in an economic, social and environmental way for our future generations.

N. Macdonald: I'll just take a few minutes of the time that I have. I want to address two points. One deals with how this place operates, and then the second deals with some specific examples that other members have given about the topic that's here before us.

The previous speaker comes out of local government, as many people here do, and the motion put forward is that the House should discuss these very critically important issues around how we transition the economy that we have now into an economy that deals with the very large challenge of climate change. Everybody recognizes — I think the wider public recognizes — that that's the direction that we need to go, but for that to happen, this place has to operate in a way that British Columbians actually think it's supposed to operate.

There have been a number of government initiatives that government MLAs have put forward, but let's not pretend that these came forward in any way that is collaborative. You have the climate action secretariat, which presumably is doing important work at tremendous expense, yet everything about that is kept secret. We still do not even know who they consult with, who they meet

with. To go forward in that way is bound to lead to problems and to inhibit the sort of discussions that we should be having here on behalf of all British Columbians.

We have a B.C. energy plan that's put forward and described at tremendous expense as an environmental or green action plan. It clearly is not. There are all sorts of better descriptions for the B.C. energy plan. It is clearly not a green plan, and yet the government does not allow that discussion to happen in a reasonable way and instead spends tremendous amounts of money to try to distort what's going on.

If we're going to move forward on climate change, then there is responsibility for members of this House to have the discussions that need to take place happen in a way that is reasonable, which means we have to have a committee system that works. We don't. You talk to people who have been to Ottawa. They have a committee system that is far superior to anything that we have.

If we do work as committees and come forward with ideas, then those ideas have to go forward. The Aquaculture Committee — sincere efforts were made. Nothing has come of that work, and that, essentially, is what happens most of the time. There are many opportunities for us.

I realize I can only take a few more minutes.

Within forestry, where I'm the critic, there are opportunities around making a better utilization of the resource that's there. There are clear tools that we can put in place immediately to get better utilization.

[1140]

I think most British Columbians would be surprised at the amount of waste that's left in our forest. If over the past five years you took the amount of marketable wood that was left in the forest and put them on logging trucks, it would stretch from Victoria to Halifax and a better part of the way back. That's a big problem.

There are no simple answers, but British Columbians expect this place to come up with some of those solutions. The answer that I would give to this government is that there are two ways you can do it. You can either do it with regulation — that's a method this government stepped away from in 2003 — or you can tax carbon in a way that is more widely applied.

For each of those things, you can find solutions. But you will only find the solutions if this House works in a way that it often doesn't. I think that's the challenge to MLAs — to find that solution. When you come out of local government, you find that people of wide views can work together to find solutions. We have to figure out how to make this place work that way. With that, I'll take my seat and pass it on.

D. Barnett: Today I stand here in support of this motion. We all know that in the world today we have what's called climate change. With climate change comes all of the initiatives that governments have put on the table,

which need to be worked on with people from all walks of life and experts in the field.

We have started a process. When the Premier announced the Climate Action Team in 2008, it was a great start to changing the way that our province of British Columbia will go in the future. There were people on this committee from all walks of life, and I was one of the fortunate ones on this committee.

I learned from scientists, who are the people that can tell us more than we could ever imagine about what will happen in the future with climate change and our world as it is today. Tomorrow will be different.

British Columbia has been fortunate that it has taken some leadership roles. It is sad that when we go out to British Columbians, we cannot as a government stand stronger together on initiatives put before this House. People are concerned about their future. They're concerned about jobs. They're concerned about the economy. But they're also scared when all they hear is negativism — that when good initiatives are put on the table by governments, there is a negative attitude.

Forestry is very important to where I come from. Forestry is what fed my family for 40-some-odd years and will, hopefully, continue to feed my family. For forestry, this government has put over \$35 million in a bioenergy strategy that uses wood waste that has been left on the forest floor and trees ravaged by the mountain pine beetle to generate new, clean electricity that can create new jobs and opportunities for families in forest-dependent communities.

This is also a topic that not everybody agrees on — how we deal with the pine beetle and the forests on the floors. There are many opportunities in my riding. There are communities that are still on diesel generators that are trying to put together biomass projects. But, you know, there has to be private investment in order for this to work.

There have been studies done. I have been working with these communities. Without the private sector and the public sector working together, we will not obtain our goals. We will not have these new jobs, and we will not have the dollars and cents that we need to put into our education system to be ready for the new economy, as it is coming quicker than we ever thought it would.

I agree with my colleague across the floor about the agricultural industry. It is one of the most important industries in British Columbia because without food, you have nothing. But there have been many, many things done over the past many years in the agriculture industry, and mostly by the private sector. Government has assisted. Government has put good legislation in place, and there are many new agriculture ideas and research projects working in British Columbia today.

[1145]

I could talk on this topic for quite a while, because it is very near and dear to my heart. I would just like to say

that I hope in the near future we all move forward in the best interests of this province of British Columbia.

M. Sather: It's my pleasure to join the discussion on green jobs and the low-carbon economy. You know, the basic thing that has to be understood and accepted in order for us to have this discussion or bring it to fruition is an agreement that climate change is real. Now, one would hope that that discussion wouldn't be necessary at this point in our evolution, but it is.

You see all kinds of articles out there denying climate change. You see the Fraser Institute putting out those kinds of reports. I know that members opposite — some of them — share a lot of the views of that organization, but I hope none are climate change doubters, let alone deniers, and the same with anyone on this side. I certainly would hope not.

What we're looking at is a disconnect, with an emphasis on an import-export economy where we get everything produced at the lowest cost and the highest profit, which is typically way offshore. It has to be shipped all around the world in this system. It simply doesn't work if we're going to really fight climate change, and we have to do that. We can't pretend that we can continue to ship stuff all over the world and still fight climate change.

Producing locally in British Columbia is the best way. The greenest job you can get right off the bat is a job that's here in British Columbia — right? So let's work from that assumption. But you hear a lot of politicians as well.... I have to say that our Prime Minister is one that gives one a lot of cause for doubt about the actuality of tackling climate change and producing a low-carbon economy.

Agriculture is certainly one of the industries — and it's been mentioned a couple times by others — where we could produce locally. I encourage the Minister of Agriculture to bring back the Buy B.C. program. Hopefully, he will do that.

We're going to, of course, have import-export. We're probably not going to be producing vehicles here in British Columbia, and that's fine. But for the stuff that we can produce here, like reducing the amount of raw log exports so that we can produce more of those goods here instead of shipping them to China.... They produce them and ship the finished goods back to Canada, which makes no sense in terms of fighting climate change.

Again, I want to talk a little bit about independent power producers, which are very, very.... The government likes to talk a lot about them, but it seems to me that the motive for the government is largely profits for friends and insiders — and there are a whole lot of them in that industry — rather than that it is truly green.

Also, if an industry is going to be green, it has to do more than reducing greenhouse gases. That's important. Of course it is. But also, you can't be green and not take into account the needs of wildlife and fish, and I don't

see that happening with the discussion that's going on right now around IPPs.

The member for West Vancouver–Sea to Sky mentioned the innovative clean energy fund, which this government has whacked. It is really an essential program. I've talked to those entrepreneurs who have used that program who have said that it's essential to them in developing the new technology that we need to move to a green economy. So let's hope that the support is returned.

Similarly, it's hard to understand that of all the programs, the government would pull the LiveSmart B.C. program. That certainly helped people to not only reduce their carbon footprint but also to save them some money, which is not a bad thing either.

We definitely need to have more effort on clean technology, research and development, and we need to move forward on a number of fronts in order to ensure that we are having a truly green economy and a low-carbon economy.

[1150]

R. Sultan: I am delighted, as so many of my other colleagues have already asserted, to support this motion. Indeed, the degree of unanimity on both sides of the House on this motion perhaps heralds a new spirit of coalition and congruence of philosophies. I can only attribute it to the eloquence of our arguments having won over the members opposite. I don't see too much evidence of motion in the other direction.

I seem to recall a passage from the Bible two Sundays ago in church about the lions eating hay and the foxes lying down with the chickens, and peace among adversaries reigned. So there we are.

But I cannot resist putting on the opposition hat, because we have so seldom an opportunity to do so, to pick a few little nits from the opposition in the process. It would start with their energy policy, which I would paraphrase as their electrical energy policy. I would say it's sort of a four-point program.

"We don't need no more electrical energy. If we do need it, we'll import it from the United States. Our very last resort is to buy B.C." They conveniently skip over the many impassioned speeches on lumber, including the gentleman who climbed up the flagpole in the middle of the night to inspect a sign that had been imported from the United States — those dastards on the opposite side checking up in the middle of the night on our signposts. And: "No energy at all trumps green energy."

That is indeed a synopsis of the opposition party's energy policy. "We'll just get by with candlelight if necessary, and when the lights go out, don't blame us. You didn't conserve enough."

Then I cannot also resist the temptation to needle them a little about their policy on the carbon tax. I must say they and, in fact, all of my constituents — I would say it's universal — do not quite get the point that when the

carbon tax goes up, the income taxes go down. So when they speak against the increase in the carbon tax, they're also speaking against tax cuts, and this is astonishing.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

We have a neutral carbon tax, but that's been sort of skipped over. It's a very compelling argument. Now, I'd be the first to say that not all of my constituents are thrilled by the carbon tax. But when I point out to them that what has been removed from the left pocket has been put back into the right pocket, they say: "Oh, I didn't know that." Some people say: "I just don't believe it." But not everybody is as skeptical as the member for Powell River–Sunshine Coast, who represents the lowest child poverty precinct in all of British Columbia, we have heard this morning.

So those are the energy policies. That's the carbon tax. I might also needle them a little bit about their failure to support vigorously three very inspiring green energy sectors, starting with the run-of-the-river IPP projects.

I think, again, their policy boils down to the fact of "public power, good; private power, bad" — that phrase out of something that Mr. Orwell wrote a number of years ago. Public power, good; private power, bad.

We were all bombarded with that famous e-mail, computer generating, showing all the potential run-of-the-river projects in B.C., and it looked like the map of British Columbia had acquired a very dense case of the measles. I mean, there were only about 10,000 potential sites.

I had many screaming constituents saying: "How can you allow this to happen? How can our Minister of Environment be immune to this travesty? We're selling our rivers to them." Mr. Mair was reinventing the salmon theme all over again. This time he was against run-of-the-river power projects.

The actual number of projects being built is a token number — and, certainly, very, very carefully environmentally assessed, as I'm sure the Minister of Environment would confirm.

Another sector that has sort of been overlooked but not attacked... I would give them credit for that. But we should, while we're on the subject of green energy, acknowledge the remarkable scientific advances of a distinguished British Columbian, John MacDonald, one of the founders of MacDonald Dettwiler, most well known for their famous satellite technology, which I understand is so precise, so revealing that the American spy agencies get very nervous about it.

[1155]

I am now being signalled that I only have two seconds left to mention the NaiKun project, a huge windmill farm sponsored by the Haida up on Haida Gwaii.

These are all wonderful projects to illustrate to the member for Victoria–Swan Lake, and I heartily endorse his motion.

B. Simpson: I'll only make a few comments here.

It's unfortunate that a reasoned debate this morning was quickly turned into farce, because this is a serious topic. It's a serious topic that requires serious deliberation and thought on the part of all MLAs.

We are confronted with the greatest challenge the human species has ever been confronted with in climate change. We are challenged with the greatest economic challenge we've ever confronted in peak oil. We are going to be in a situation where, as duly elected officials, we have an obligation on behalf of all constituents to figure these things out, not make light of them in this chamber.

I think that British Columbia is very uniquely positioned for one reason and one reason only. It's a reason that this government has forgotten, and that is that British Columbians own the resources. We don't have to nationalize. We don't have to socialize. We don't have to do anything. British Columbians are the true shareholders of our public resources. British Columbians are the individuals and collectively have access to those resources, so we are in a unique position in the world to redefine our economy to take into consideration climate change and peak oil.

That's the substance of this debate, that's how we create green jobs, and that's how we move beyond greenwashing, which is often what happens when you talk about a green economy and green jobs, and get down to the real work. What is lacking is a concerted, deliberate plan that takes us there. There are bits and pieces of it, but it is not there. It would have been nice if in this chamber we had the opportunity to actually be serious about that.

I agree with the member for Columbia River–Revelstoke that we need to use our parliamentary committees better to actually flesh this out.

Mr. Speaker: Does the member for Cariboo North want to adjourn debate?

B. Simpson: I'll turn it to the House.

Hon. B. Penner: I will move adjournment of debate just after I make this observation. I know the member from Revelstoke made mention that there's a secret about who people are meeting with on climate change.

It indicates.... I won't use this as a prop, but our climate action plan actually lays that out. If the member from Revelstoke would care to take a look, on pages 95, 96, 97 and 98 he would find that the climate action secretariat staff and the Climate Action Team have actually met with more than 450 different groups and individuals from around the province on the issue of climate change.

I recommend this document to all members of the House to inform themselves about climate change and of the importance that we take a concerted effort to combat climate change, which is something our government is doing.

Hon. B. Penner moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. B. Penner moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House adjourned at 11:59 a.m.

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