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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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

SECOND SESSION, 39TH PARLIAMENT

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CONTENTS

Tuesday, March 2, 2010
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Page

Routine Business

Introductions by Members.....	3087
Statements (Standing Order 25B)	3087
Quatse River Hatchery information centre	
C. Trevena	
Cypress Mountain Olympic venues and events	
J. McIntyre	
Success By 6 program and awards on south Vancouver Island	
R. Fleming	
Canadian pride	
S. Cadieux	
Recreational roadway and wildlife corridor in Maple Ridge	
M. Sather	
Olympic Games volunteers and torchbearers	
H. Bloy	
Oral Questions.....	3089
School district costs and funding	
R. Austin	
Hon. M. MacDiarmid	
Burnaby school district costs and funding	
K. Corrigan	
Hon. M. MacDiarmid	
School district costs and funding	
N. Macdonald	
Hon. M. MacDiarmid	
D. Routley	
Supported child development program	
S. Fraser	
Hon. M. Polak	
Funding of programs for special needs children	
M. Karagianis	
Hon. M. Polak	
Camping reservations phone service and local booking for Bowron Lake	
B. Simpson	
Hon. B. Penner	
Funding for arts and culture	
S. Herbert	
Hon. K. Krueger	

Orders of the Day

Presentation of Estimates	3094
Hon. C. Hansen	
Budget Debate.....	3094
Hon. C. Hansen	
B. Ralston	

Introduction and First Reading of Bills.....	3101
Bill 2 — Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2010	
Hon. C. Hansen	
Tabling Documents.....	3102
<i>Budget and Fiscal Plan 2010/11-2012/13</i>	
Government's service plans and strategic plan	
Hon. C. Hansen	

TUESDAY, MARCH 2, 2010

The House met at 1:39 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Routine Business

Introductions by Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, because of the many guests that we have here today, on behalf of both sides of the House I would like to welcome you all here. It is budget day, so if we allowed everybody to do the introductions, the budget might not come till four or five o'clock this afternoon.

Statements

(Standing Order 25B)

QUATSE RIVER HATCHERY INFORMATION CENTRE

C. Trevena: Walking into the new Quatse River Hatchery information centre gives a sense of walking into part of the Vancouver Aquarium. It's stylishly designed, and there are lot of surprises and lots of ways to learn about the cycle of the salmon.

Meanwhile, outside the building are dozens and dozens of tanks filled with millions of minute salmon. The Quatse Hatchery offices used to be in ATCO trailers on the Quatse River close to Port Hardy, but the Northern Vancouver Island Salmonid Enhancement Association has certainly moved on.

It started in 1983 to help recover salmon stocks and restore their habitat on the northern end of the Island. It produces fish for release into the wild, undertakes stream rehabilitation and restoration, and monitors fish populations. It also carries out educational programs and works with the community on helping salmon survive and thrive in our waters.

[1340]

Millions of juveniles are produced, and hundreds of thousands of fish are developed at the site perched high above the river next to the picturesque Quatse campground. The enhancement works on rivers across the north Island, with cohos, pinks and steelhead on the Cluxewe and coho, pinks, chum and steelhead for the Quatse. The group also conducts stock enumeration on the Marble River and swims on rivers near Port Alice and Zeballos as well as working more on the Marble River.

While the fish are fascinating, the stewardship centre is a real draw for the whole north Island. It shows the benefit of salmon habitat in the coastal ecosystem. It wants to show people that there is hope for the future of Pacific salmon and that everyone has a part to play.

The staff, who still revel in no longer working out of the trailers, are enthusiastic about the plans for expansion with a mini-theatre and more interactive displays focusing on climate change and ocean currents among the plans. There is a successful partnership with the Vancouver Aquarium as well as strong local support. Fundraising is still underway to ensure that the next phase of the project can evolve and more people learn about the importance of the millions of juveniles.

CYPRESS MOUNTAIN OLYMPIC VENUES AND EVENTS

J. McIntyre: With all the accolades flowing about the success of the Vancouver games, I thought it was fitting to single out the triumphs at Cypress Mountain, the venue for moguls, aerials and snowboarding that's located at the south end of the constituency that I'm so proud to represent.

I'd like to pay tribute to the folks at Cypress Mountain: the GM, Linda Swain, and her team, who were required to close operations early due to mild, rainy weather — a once-in-a-hundred-year event. A tribute to John Furlong and Tim Gayda, the VP of sport at VANOC, along with Paul Skelton, the manager of Cypress sports operations, who was the miracle worker of 2010.

By February 24 the *Globe and Mail* had reported that Paul's crew of 50 snow makers, groomers, mountain transport and builders had used 150,000 pounds of straw, made 400 helicopter trips, flown or trucked in 9,000 cubic metres of snow and turned 21 million gallons of water into snow — a 24-7 operation nurturing the mountain and working the course continuously, which in turn yielded some of the most memorable moments of these golden games: four gold and two silver medals.

Let me count. Alex Bilodeau, the first gold on Canadian soil ever for men's moguls; Maëlle Ricker, the first gold for a Canadian woman at home for women's snowboard cross; Ashleigh McIvor, gold in the women's ski cross. I have to note that these latter two superb female athletes reside in Sea to Sky, so we're especially proud.

There was Jasey Jay Anderson, gold in men's parallel giant slalom for snowboarding; Jenn Heil, silver in women's moguls; and Mike Robertson, silver in snowboard cross.

I would just like the House to join us in congratulating all the athletes, organizers, workers and VANOC volunteers for making us proud Canadians. As someone said so aptly, it was the little mountain that could.

SUCCESS BY 6 PROGRAM AND AWARDS ON SOUTH VANCOUVER ISLAND

R. Fleming: I want to say a few words today about a community organization that's doing great work in my

community advocating for and coordinating learning resources for parents with young children. I'm referring to Success By 6 on south Vancouver Island.

The organization was created several years ago by a council of partners to support communities and organizations working together to increase early childhood development opportunities across all social and economic boundaries. Success By 6 is doing a great job with media partners and with the public in spreading the word about the importance of the zero-to-six learning years when children embark upon their lifetime of learning.

The organization also strategizes about how to influence public policy at the local and provincial levels. This is vitally important, forward-thinking work that is desperately needed if Canada is to move from second-to-last in the OECD countries to becoming a leader in early childhood and learning opportunities in the world.

I had the opportunity to attend Success By 6 South Vancouver Island's 2010 Early Years Awards on February 17, which honoured businesses and organizations making a difference in the lives of families with young children in my community. I'd like to recognize the 2010 award winners.

In the category of favourite park, Beacon Hill Park; favourite free outing, Greater Victoria Public Library system; favourite inexpensive outing, Beacon Hill petting zoo; favourite café, Crumbsby's Cupcake Café; favourite restaurant, Pizzeria Prima Strada; favourite retail store, Buddies Toys; favourite recreation centre, Juan de Fuca Recreation Centre.

[1345]

Favourite place to connect with other parents, *Island Parent Magazine*; favourite family-friendly workplace employer, Camosun College; favourite day care, Lakehill Preschool. Child advocate of the year this year was Eva Bild from Mothering Touch.

I would invite all members of the House to join me in congratulating the award recipients and thanking the staff and volunteers at Success By 6 south Vancouver Island for the vital work they contribute to this community.

CANADIAN PRIDE

S. Cadieux: Since the Olympic Torch Relay began to the end of the 2010 Olympic Games, we've seen an outpouring of Canadian spirit on a scale and with an honesty I haven't seen before. What's at the root of this, and why now? Have we finally reached a point as a nation where we feel a sense of what it means to be Canadian, where we can define it without feeling guilty or boastful — just plain proud?

I was at T.E. Scott Elementary School in my riding on February 12. I was attending the school's 2010 assembly. There was a wonderful energy amongst the children and teachers. There were performances, there were torch-

bearers, there was artwork, there was our anthem, and there were two essay contest winners. They had been asked to write about why it was great to be Canadian, to live in Canada, and I'd like to share what two of the winning entrants wrote and recited.

Gulseerat Boparai, in grade 5, wrote: "Canada is a great country. It's a destination for many people coming from war-torn countries." She continues: "People respect other people who are different from them. Canada has a fair government who takes everybody's votes into account and listens to everybody's opinions."

Sahil Sian, in grade 3, believes that "in Canada there are polar bears, salmon, beavers, caribou, coyotes, groundhogs, foxes, grizzly bears, deers, killer whales and dolphins. Canada has lots of trees. Canada has a good environment because all Canadians respect trees."

He continues: "The elementary and secondary studies are free in Canada so everyone can learn. All of these things make Canada a great place in the world, and I am proud to be Canadian." Truer words couldn't be spoken.

I'd like to thank these two kids, the whole T.E. Scott family and the rest of British Columbia for a heartwarming show of pride in our country and in our province over the Olympic Games period, and I certainly encourage everyone to continue to show their pride and their exuberance through the Paralympic Games March 12 to 21.

RECREATIONAL ROADWAY AND WILDLIFE CORRIDOR IN MAPLE RIDGE

M. Sather: I would like to commend four community groups in my constituency for their efforts to enhance the livability of Maple Ridge. The Alouette valley association, the Silver Valley neighbourhood association, the Alouette River Management Society and the Haney Horsemen have coordinated efforts to develop and promote the idea of a wildlife corridor and recreational roadway along 132nd Avenue in Maple Ridge.

This stretch of rural road has seen increasing traffic in recent years due to development in the area. These groups are actively promoting the recreational roadway concept to reduce traffic and enhance access to many surrounding recreational facilities.

Currently, horse riders, hikers and joggers must travel along the road's narrow shoulder to get from recreational venues like Maple Ridge Park, Horseman's Park and Maple Ridge Equi-sports Centre to the various horse and hiking trails in the area.

The groups envision the roadway being narrowed, the speed limit lowered and the shoulders of the road widened to accommodate horses and pedestrians in a safer setting. Due to increased vehicular traffic on 132nd Avenue, two horses have been hit and subsequently died.

However, the sign campaign that has been launched to encourage drivers to slow down is already beginning to have a positive effect.

The recreational roadway would promote a healthy lifestyle by supporting activities that get people out of their cars and into nature. The features of the recreational roadway would become an attraction to the community, increasing recreational activities and tourism dollars spent in Maple Ridge and enhancing the attractiveness of Maple Ridge to new businesses.

The wildlife corridor and recreational roadway is a novel planning concept that can add significant value to communities. I look forward to its adoption in my community.

[1350]

OLYMPIC GAMES VOLUNTEERS AND TORCHBEARERS

H. Bloy: Go, Canada, go. We've heard that a lot — "Go, Canada, go" cheers — over the past 17 days. *O Canada*, our national anthem, has been sung thousands of times from arenas to street corners to private venues and homes. We even had a spontaneous rendition of our national anthem right here in our assembly yesterday.

The Olympics brought more national pride than anyone could have imagined. The pride was encouraged by the dedication of our athletes and coaches. But it was the thousands and thousands of volunteers and unsung heroes we should also be so proud of.

Dale Walters, Canadian Olympic bronze medallist in boxing at the 1984 games in Los Angeles. I would like to have seen Dale carry the torch, but Dale paid out of his own pocket for Shawn O'Sullivan, Canadian Olympic silver medallist in boxing, to fly to British Columbia from Toronto and hosted him during his stay here.

Shawn has had a tough life due to boxing injuries, and if it was not for Dale Walters, Shawn would not have been able to make the journey or carry the torch. Shawn was so excited about the opportunity to carry the torch, and it was so heartwarming to see that big Irish smile back on his face once again.

Some great people in British Columbia and Burnaby have carried the torch: Jeff Clark and Miles Ritchie, Burnaby firefighters; Neil Hastie, longtime sports supporter; Bob McNary, a huge supporter of the Special Olympics.

In the upcoming Paralympics, Steve Lewarne, an advancement officer for athletics at Simon Fraser University, will carry the torch. Steve suffered a stroke at the age of 12, with limited use of his left side, but that has never slowed Steve down. Peter Legge, member of the Order of B.C. and a lifelong supporter of British Columbia, will also be carrying the torch.

Oral Questions

SCHOOL DISTRICT COSTS AND FUNDING

R. Austin: Mr. Speaker, last December school board chairs, superintendents and secretary-treasurers met to discuss a report delivered by the British Columbia Association of School Business Officials. That report is entitled *Provincial Template: 2010-2011 Projected Cost and Funding Pressures*.

My question is to the Minister of Education. Has she read that report?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: Yes, I have.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Skeena has a supplemental.

R. Austin: This report clearly shows how this government is undermining the education system in British Columbia and misleading the province by glossing over the massive costs this government is downloading onto our education system. I'd like to remind the Education Minister of some of those costs: \$43½ million in unfunded contract costs, \$2.8 million more for medical premiums, \$2.4 million more for hydro and \$2.9 million for carbon offsets.

My question is to the Education Minister. Is the Association of School Business Officials wrong, or has the minister been misleading British Columbians by trumpeting meagre investments and ignoring increased costs?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: We certainly have in the past, and we'll continue to work with our education partners. We understand that particularly at this time of year, there is concern. There are efforts to get our ear. But we share the valuing of the education system, and that is why this government has invested record amounts in education.

We are all aware of the demographic challenges that British Columbia faces, like many of the other jurisdictions in North America, where we have 56,000 fewer students in our school system than we did in 2001. Yet in spite of that, we've invested more than \$1.3 billion more in this system.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a further supplemental.

R. Austin: This minister continues to tell only one side of the story. In addition to increasing costs on districts...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

R. Austin: ...this government made massive cuts that directly impacted the education system. The \$110 million annual facilities grant was slashed by this government after many districts had already signed contracts to fix schools up during the summer. And this government stopped funding B.C. School Sports. The Education Minister told the people of this province that our children didn't need competitive sports, that they could do more "walking, dancing and playing in parks."

[1355]

Again to the Minister of Education: how can schools deliver the education our children deserve when this government continues to bury districts in cuts and increasing costs?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: Every year since 2001 we've increased education funding in this province. Although I was not here, I believe that every year the opposition has tried to rewrite history and say that we haven't. But in fact, we've increased funding every single year.

Last year, at a time when jurisdictions around the world and certainly in North America were reducing funding, our government increased education funding to the classroom by \$84 million — not only that, but an additional investment of \$447 million in accelerated spending in capital.

BURNABY SCHOOL DISTRICT COSTS AND FUNDING

K. Corrigan: This government's decision to continue adding costs onto districts has consequences. In my home community of Burnaby the district is projecting funding shortfalls of \$9 million for 2010-11, \$8.2 million for 2011-2012 and \$9.3 million for 2012-13. Burnaby has the second-lowest administrative costs in the province. Its latest provincial review said that Burnaby was a leading-edge district provincially and internationally.

Will the Minister of Education please tell the House what the Burnaby district should cut to make up for shortfalls caused by this government?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: In Burnaby enrolment is about the same as it was in 2001. In spite of that, they received an additional \$4.5 million in funding last year. In spite of a very small decline in enrolment, in fact, overall the funding to this district is up by 31 percent since 2001.

At a time when the government is under considerable challenge, we are continuing to invest in education. In particular, this year I am so proud that we are investing in early childhood education with the beginning of full-day kindergarten.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

K. Corrigan: Here are a couple of the costs that have been downloaded on Burnaby just in the last year: \$4.3 million worth of loss to the annual facilities grant, \$3.3 million extra costs for teachers' salaries and millions of dollars more that I won't go into.

The minister, a minute ago, said that we are going to work with our education partners. Well, what a coincidence. Last month the member for Burnaby-Edmonds and I hand-delivered a letter to the minister detailing the award-winning efforts made by the Burnaby district to reduce costs and increase efficiency. It also detailed the unique challenges the district faces with one of the highest levels of poverty in the province and a high concentration of refugee students.

We said that we wanted to work with the minister and invited her to Burnaby to see how her funding decisions will impact the district's efforts to deliver high-quality public education. Last week we received an answer that the minister would not be coming to Burnaby.

My question for the minister: why is she refusing to inform herself of the impacts the cuts will have on students in Burnaby and throughout the province?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: I'd certainly like to point out that in the school district of Burnaby, the per-pupil funding is over \$1,800 a year higher. It is a 32 percent increase since 2001. The funding has increased.

[1400]

It is vitally important across our sector of education, as well as every other part of government, that we look for administrative savings. We've certainly done that within the ministry. We've reduced our budget. It needs to happen everywhere.

I do appreciate the efforts that are being made in Burnaby and in every school district, but we need to do that, and we need to do that so that we can continue to invest in the classroom. That's our goal. That's why we're expanding early learning. That's why we're going in the directions we're going. We all have to work together, and we are.

SCHOOL DISTRICT COSTS AND FUNDING

N. Macdonald: This is a perfect example of deceit by omission. The minister stands up and tells one part of the story, and if this minister has read...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members, Members.
Just take your seat, Member.

I would advise the member to be careful with his choice of words, please.

Continue, Member.

N. Macdonald: If the minister has read the report from the association that represents B.C. school district secretary-treasurers, then she will know the following: salary increases, \$43.5 million; pension cost increases, \$23.1 million; carbon offsets, \$5.1 million. On top of that, you have MSP premium increases, SmartTool software, B.C. Hydro rate increases, CUPE trade adjustments.

It goes on and on, and it comes to a total of \$254.5 million. That is a conservative total. All of those costs downloaded by this government onto districts. For that this minister hands over \$37 million. That is a massive gap. So what do you want districts to cut? Do you want them to cut special education? Do you want them to cut...?

Mr. Speaker: Member, please put the question.

N. Macdonald: What does the minister suggest these districts cut? Further cuts to special education? Further cuts to cleaning, closing more schools? What do you suggest these districts do?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: We understand that school districts are concerned around the time of the budget, and we understand that they are working with us and making efforts to preserve classroom funding. As I've said, we certainly appreciate the efforts that districts make.

Speaking of this district, like many others, funding is up by 33 percent in the member's district since 2001. What we have tried to do, and I would submit successfully, is keep classroom funding in place. We increased classroom funding last year by \$84 million.

We are a government who is looking to invest in the future of our province, which is our students, and that is why we are going ahead with full-day kindergarten. That's why we're determined over the next few years to invest in learning for three-year-olds and four-year-olds, and we'll continue on that course.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

N. Macdonald: The B.C. Liberals ran on the fiction that they would protect public education — the complete fiction. They knew the true fiscal mess that they had put this province in. B.C. Liberals alone knew, and yet they very deliberately misrepresented the truth to British Columbians. That is the fact of the matter. The funding gap in education will force cuts and school closures, yet the minister tries to distort the reality....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Member, just take your seat for a second.

Members.

Continue, Member.

N. Macdonald: The minister tries to distort the reality the children and parents face. Does the minister deny that there is a funding gap of hundreds of millions of dollars, and if the minister thinks that the secretary-treasurers are wrong, then what is the gap? What figure does she have? What is the funding gap that you are thrusting upon school districts?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: Again, I will say that what we did in this past budget year is we increased education funding to the classroom by \$84 million.

[1405]

We continue to invest in education in spite of what the member opposite and all the members opposite would like us to believe. We're investing in the future of our province, in the young people: in particular, in early learning; in StrongStart B.C. centres; and in infrastructure — an ambitious program of \$447 million on new schools, on seismic upgrades. The facts are there in black and white — investment in the future of B.C.

D. Routley: This minister continues to mislead British Columbians about education funding. It is a misleading claim, this claim by this minister of increased funding. How could fewer students and increased funding in our system equate to fewer services, cuts to services, cuts in the classroom? More service is what that should equal.

This government has imposed costs on districts that far outweigh any increases that they have allowed. The Cowichan school board, employee groups, parent groups and students wrote to this minister about a \$15 million shortfall that they face this year. To quote that letter: "We express our deep concerns and call on the government, the provincial government, to reinstate all funding lost due to recent cuts and funding changes."

Did this minister hear them? What has she done to address the deficits in the classrooms of the Cowichan school district?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: It strikes me that what the member would like to know about is the provincial budget for next year, and I'd like to reassure him that in minutes we will be hearing the details about the budget.

What I can tell the member opposite and everyone in this House is that we continue to be determined to invest in education in this province. We understand very clearly it's the future of British Columbia. That's why we're so committed to early education. That's why we're committed to all of these students from zero until they graduate from high school and beyond. Shortly you will find out from this budget that we, in fact, meant it when we said it.

I would certainly like to close by correcting one of the various pieces of misinformation that have come out in this discussion, and that is the salary increases. They

have been fully funded by this government as per our promise.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

D. Routley: Okay, this minister continues to parrot this claim. This is a misleading claim. Every student and every parent, every trustee in this province knows that our schools are suffering deficits. The deficits are in the classrooms, in the lives of our students.

This minister needs to face squarely the people of B.C. and be honest about funding in this province. The fact is that this minister.... Her balance sheet seems to only have one side. It's all about the income. She ignores the costs that the decisions of her own government have imposed on our school districts, and that translates into cuts in the lives of our students.

When will this minister face the people of B.C., face the students of B.C. and acknowledge the deficits that her decisions, her government's decisions, have created in our classrooms?

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: You know, it's interesting to hear this discussion about education. I am glad that we all feel so passionately about it because that's one thing that we share. But we have an education system today in British Columbia — and I really want to remind the members opposite of this.... We have a system that we should all be incredibly proud of.

When we look at how our students are performing....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Minister, just take your seat for a second. Continue, Minister.

[1410]

Hon. M. MacDiarmid: When we look at how our students are performing internationally and nationally, they are always close to or at the top across Canada.

I'm happy to review the funding as many times as the members opposite wish me to do so. But again I will say that every single year in this province since 2001 it has increased. It's at record levels. We're spending \$1.3 billion more on education today than we did in 2001.

SUPPORTED CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

S. Fraser: This government, as part of its prebudget spiel, has been saying that it is committed to helping B.C. families. But its treatment of special needs children and their parents tells a very different story. Children are becoming collateral damage to this government's systemic cuts and betrayal — betrayal of children like Angel Magnussen in Port Alberni.

This 13-year-old, who has very, very complicated health needs, is being stripped of the assistance provided through the supported child development program. She's losing the one-on-one care that keeps her safe.

To the Minister of Children and Family Development: will the minister reverse this dangerous, dangerous decision and reinstate the assistance provided to children like Angel Magnussen through the supported child development program?

Hon. M. Polak: The budget for the supported child development program has remained in place. There have been no reductions.

With respect to the individual case, if the member would like to bring that matter directly to the attention of my office, we'd be happy to look into it for him.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

S. Fraser: I tried that already, two weeks ago. Letters have been coming in from the family; letters have been coming in from the caregivers. This case is a test of this government's commitment to protecting and improving the lives of children and families.

If this funding is not restored.... This is a 13-year-old girl. There are others in the valley facing exactly the same situation, and others in the province. Her safety and health will be at severe risk if this funding is not restored. Her parents will face financial ruin, and they are not alone, as I've said.

Her physician writes: "The consequences of withdrawing" — and they are; you are withdrawing — "current funding from Angel will have serious negative consequences on both her and her family."

So let's try it again, hon. Speaker. Will the minister stop abandoning special needs children and their parents? She can start by restoring the funding to Angel in the program that I have referred to.

Hon. M. Polak: I'll repeat to the member: there have been no reductions whatsoever in supported child development. In fact, this year's budget saw an increase to that particular program.

With respect to the individual, those decisions are made based on assessments of individual needs, and I'm happy to work with the member and with our office to see what we can do for the individual. But again, there have been absolutely no reductions whatsoever to the supported child development program.

FUNDING OF PROGRAMS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

M. Karagianis: In February in this House the minister assured us that despite the funding cuts coming from her ministry, they would not touch children with

special needs. Yet now we hear that critically needed services for children like Angel Magnussen are being withdrawn. So again, through to the minister: will she admit that the cuts coming from her ministry are touching the most vulnerable in this province?

Hon. M. Polak: In fact, our government has a priority to serve those most vulnerable in this province. It's shown by the fact that our ministry budget has increased by more than \$400 million since 2001. There have been no reductions whatsoever to services for children with special needs. In fact, to the program that was mentioned, supported child development, that budget figure actually saw an increase this year.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

[1415]

M. Karagianis: While the minister continues to claim that there are no cuts to funding for children with special needs, \$10 million in cuts are coming down right now from her ministry to organizations that in fact serve special needs individuals in our communities.

Now we have children like Angel Magnussen. These are critical services. Her doctor has said they are critical services. The letters to the minister have said they are critical services. So we are asking the minister to step in and stop these cuts that hurt special needs children in this province before there is a tragedy.

Hon. M. Polak: I will repeat it for the member. There have been no reductions in funding whatsoever to the supported child development program. In fact, that area of our budget saw an increase for this year.

We continue to invest at record rates. This past year we invested fully more than \$800 million in our community services through contracted agencies. That's an increase of \$100 million in the last five years.

CAMPING RESERVATIONS PHONE SERVICE AND LOCAL BOOKING FOR BOWRON LAKE

B. Simpson: Well, hopefully, now the Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Environment know that in fact you have to phone Guelph, Ontario, to book a campsite in a B.C. park. That's a direct result of the dismantling of Tourism B.C. which used to do that function on behalf of taxpayers.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

B. Simpson: My question to the Minister of Environment is specifically about Bowron lakes. As I mentioned

yesterday, as well, this company does not take Visa. Many of the bookings for Bowron lakes are done in Europe, and they are having a hard time getting cash or money orders in Canadian funds to make the booking.

My question is to the Minister of Environment. Is he willing to meet with all of the businesses involved in Bowron lakes and look at a solution for local booking of the Bowron Lake chain through the local parks contractor? Very specific question.

Hon. B. Penner: I am pleased to have the opportunity to correct some false information that this member has been portraying to the public over the last 24 hours.

Mr. Speaker: Minister, just be careful of the choice of words again, please.

Hon. B. Penner: I'll provide some more accurate information that the member was not providing to the public. In fact, last year there were no bids accepted from B.C.-based companies to provide the service for camping in B.C. Parks so that people can make reservations. B.C. Parks is interested in providing an enhanced level of reservation service.

Now, as a result of the new contract that's put in place, individuals can make reservations in advance in more than 70 provincial parks for a specific campsite next to their favourite trail, their friends, their family. In the past that was not possible to do, so this will be a service enhancement for people visiting B.C. Parks.

Clearly, while it's regrettable that there were no bids received from B.C.-based companies, it's difficult for government to award contracts to people that haven't submitted bids. I would expect that the member of the opposition would understand that.

Now, in terms of the Bowron Lake Provincial Park, I'm pleased to do whatever we can to assist with people visiting that park.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

The member has a supplemental.

B. Simpson: I guess the minister was ready for a different question than the one I asked, because he gave an answer to a question I didn't ask. I didn't ask about the bidding process. I'm not sure what it was. I'm not sure what it was that the minister was actually referring to.

On the website it clearly indicates that Guelph, Ontario, is now providing this incremental service that the minister is talking about. Yet the minister must know, because the people in Bowron lakes have been asking for

quite some time, that they want local booking for that wilderness experience.

[1420]

That's my question to the minister. Will he meet with the people in the Bowron lakes chain who want that local parks contractor to do the booking? Will he meet with them and explore that option so we keep some good, quality service in B.C. with B.C. jobs?

Hon. B. Penner: As I've indicated, I'm interested in talking to people around the province about whatever we can do to enhance camping.

I can tell you one thing that will do that is this new contract that we've put in place which will allow people to make specific reservations for individual sites that are their favourite sites, close to the lake, close to a hiking trail or close to their friends and families — something that's never happened before in the history of British Columbia.

Our government will not apologize for seeking the best possible value for taxpayers, as we deliver top-quality services in British Columbia. We believe in competition, in one Canada. We just came through the Winter Olympics. Canada celebrated as one country. We believe it makes sense to treat all of Canada equally when it comes to bidding.

FUNDING FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

S. Herbert: Kidd Pivot, an internationally renowned, B.C.-based contemporary dance company, is relocating from B.C. to Frankfurt, Germany, in part because of the B.C. Liberal cuts to arts investments — cuts that artistic director Crystal Pite calls pretty scary. When will the minister responsible for the arts act and stop this creative brain drain, stop the cuts and reinvest in the arts?

Hon. K. Krueger: In the nine years that we've had a B.C. Liberal government in British Columbia we have invested \$531 million in grants in arts and cultural organizations. One example: in 2008 we put \$150 million into the BC150 legacy fund, and that is more than four times what the NDP government of the '90s put in, in their last three years in office.

[End of question period.]

Orders of the Day

Hon. C. Hansen: Mr. Speaker, I move that this House at its next sitting resolve itself for this session into a committee to consider the supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion approved.

Presentation of Estimates

ESTIMATES OF SUMS REQUIRED FOR THE SERVICE OF THE PROVINCE

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: Estimates of Sums Required for the Service of the Province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, and a supplement to the estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011, recommending the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. C. Hansen moved that the said message and the estimates accompanying the same be referred to the Committee of Supply.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move, seconded by the hon. Premier of British Columbia, that the Speaker do now leave the chair for the House to go into Committee of Supply.

Budget Debate

Hon. C. Hansen: Mr. Speaker, today I present Budget 2010, the next step forward on the road to renewed prosperity for British Columbians.

As the Lieutenant-Governor stated in the Speech from the Throne three weeks ago, this new budget builds on our Olympic momentum and sets the foundation for the province we want, not just five or ten years out but for the generations that follow.

We have come through an unprecedented global economic downturn, and although it will take time, we are on our way to recovery. Business and consumer confidence are rising. In fact, they are among the highest levels in Canada, and B.C. is expected to be among the country's leaders in economic growth in the year ahead.

That is partly due to the incredible success so far of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, which many are hailing as a turning point in B.C.'s history. There is no question that thousands of people who came to our province in the past few weeks and the billions who watched events unfold on line or on TV will play a key role in lifting our economy both in the short term and over time.

[1425]

But our relatively strong position coming out of the global recession is about more than hosting the Olympic Games. It is also due to the fact that all through the previous decades we worked hard and set the stage for growth and prosperity. We have gone from an uncompetitive regulatory and tax environment to one of the most competitive in the world. We've paid down the

province's operating debt by more than \$9 billion and built new trade and investment partnerships with leading and emerging economies alike.

Recognizing these achievements, international agencies have increased B.C.'s credit rating seven times since 2001 and even in the wake of global downturn, it remains at triple-A, the highest possible.

All of this puts us in a good position. However, in order to achieve our goals, we must manage carefully. Too many people across B.C. are still feeling the effects of the downturn, too many families are still struggling, and too many communities still face uncertainty. With this budget we are taking action in three critical areas to help sustain our momentum on the road to economic recovery.

First, we will enhance support for the vital public services that British Columbians rely on every day, especially in times of economic hardship. Second, to advance our plan to return to balanced budgets, we will refocus government spending to ensure that we get the most out of every dollar. Third, we will move forward with a range of initiatives to stimulate and sustain economic growth and reassert our role as Canada's job creation leader so that young British Columbians growing up in B.C. today can look forward to a future of renewed prosperity, confidence and boundless opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, that sense of opportunity has long been a hallmark of this part of the world, dating back long before it was even known as British Columbia. Since time immemorial, First Nations people have drawn on its wealth of natural resources, its climate and its geography, building societies renowned for their diversity and the richness of their arts, culture and heritage.

A sense of opportunity has drawn people here from around the world for more than 150 years, but after the financial crisis of 2008 that sense of boundless potential was undermined. People were concerned about their jobs, their investments, their household expenses and their children's well-being. Even as we start to see signs of recovery, those concerns remain.

When we introduced last February's budget, we made it clear that a critical priority was helping the people of British Columbia get through these difficult times. That commitment has not wavered.

With this budget, we are moving forward to renew a sense of confidence by building on what is arguably our greatest strength, and that's British Columbia's unmatched and often envied quality of life. We're doing that by making life better for families, with more job opportunities; more affordable housing; more supports for children; and stronger, more vibrant, livable communities. Hundreds of accelerated infrastructure projects are now underway across B.C. as part of our plan to create jobs while building social housing, hospitals, schools, roads and community facilities.

Since October of 2008, \$5.3 billion has been committed to over 850 accelerated capital projects in

communities across B.C., generating and protecting approximately 34,000 construction jobs over the life of those projects. These investments will also generate thousands of spinoff jobs, each of which contributes to a family's well-being.

Tax cuts are also making life a little easier. Since 2001 most British Columbians have had their personal income taxes reduced by at least 37 percent, an additional 325,000 people no longer pay any B.C. income tax, and with this budget, we're going to deliver further targeted tax relief.

First, in spite of declining revenues, we are standing by our commitment to provide a northern and rural homeowner benefit for British Columbians living outside the greater Vancouver, Fraser Valley and capital regional districts. Beginning in 2011 they may receive a benefit of up to \$200 over and above the homeowner grant.

[1430]

We know that many smaller communities have been hit hard by the economic downturn. In 2011, people in these areas will be able to receive up to \$770 a year towards their property taxes. Seniors will be able to receive up to \$1,045, and that will give them a little extra breathing room.

Second, as the government announced in the throne speech, starting this year, families with children will be able to defer their property taxes for as long as they own their homes. This option has been available to seniors since 1974, and last year we provided a temporary two-year program to homeowners facing financial hardship.

With this budget we are providing a new, ongoing program to as many as 400,000 families in every part of British Columbia. The province will fully compensate municipal governments so that this will not affect local services. It can, however, have a significant effect — a significant benefit for B.C. families.

At a time when many parents face tough decisions month after month as they try to meet their budgets, this could mean an additional \$2,000 or \$3,000 available to them to meet their priorities in every year going forward.

Some might use the extra dollars to pay off their credit cards or car loans. Others could use the extra cash for home improvements, music lessons, tutoring help or sports equipment, while others might choose to invest it in their children's education. The point is that it's their choice. The option is available to them to enhance their quality of life in whatever way they choose.

Of course, property taxes are only part of the housing equation. For countless families, owning a home is still just a dream because, in some communities and neighbourhoods, prices are simply out of reach. With that in mind, government has made a commitment to work in partnership with municipalities to bring down housing costs for families with children and to provide them with more opportunities for homes they can afford in

existing neighbourhoods. Details of those initiatives will be announced in the months ahead.

To complement these steps on the housing front, we are providing more support for low- and middle-income parents. Over the next three years we will invest an additional \$26 million for child care subsidies, which offset the cost of child care for about 28,000 children every month.

We are also making new investments to help young British Columbians excel in sports and to increase participation in the arts for all British Columbians. Over the next three years we are allocating \$60 million for a 2010 sports and arts legacy. Half the funding is targeted to enhancing youth participation in sports, and athlete and coach development. The other half is targeted to arts investments, building on the momentum of the Cultural Olympiad.

With this budget we are also moving forward with our plan to improve education for B.C.'s youngest learners — the people who will one day run this province. Building on the success of our StrongStart early learning centres, we are fulfilling our commitment to provide full-day kindergarten for five-year-olds. This program is being phased in starting in September, and as it becomes fully operational, annual funding will rise to \$129 million annually by 2012.

We will also work in partnership with the private sector to open new preschools for three- and four-year-olds in neighbourhoods throughout B.C. We will work with partners — municipal governments, school districts, community organizations — to turn more B.C. schools into neighbourhood learning centres where people of all ages can access learning opportunities and other services under the same roof.

With declining enrolment, many of our schools now are underutilized, have underutilized space, and we are working with them to put that space to use for the benefit of whole communities.

For example, the new Neighbourhood Learning Centre in Revelstoke will offer the province's first early learning hub, with a full range of supports for families with young children. The centre will offer seamless services to children from infancy through to school age, including not just child care but medical, dental, literacy and community services as well.

This model is the way of the future. It recognizes the vital role of our schools in our communities. It has the potential to make life easier for parents, with services all in one location. It builds on our commitment to get the greatest benefit from every one of the billions of dollars invested in public education.

[1435]

We have increased education funding every year since 2001, and with this budget, the trend continues. In the coming school year, per-pupil funding will increase to \$8,300. That's the highest ever in British Columbia's his-

tory. We will provide an additional \$150 million over three years to fully fund teachers' wages and benefits and to offset other cost pressures, and we will provide \$110 million to school districts between now and March 31 of 2011 for annual facilities grants.

These are all important investments, but with this budget we are not just doing more of the same. Yes, we're putting more money into education, but we're also taking steps to find greater efficiencies to help ensure that the system is sustainable for the long term. We will work in the year ahead to identify further administrative savings and to redirect those dollars to benefit students.

This is what we mean when we say we are refocusing government spending. We are redirecting dollars from administrative and management functions so we can invest more in front-line services. This includes a commitment for new case management systems to deliver better front-line services to women, children, income assistance recipients and those most vulnerable.

We are also focusing spending in health care, emphasizing innovation with the goal of making the system financially sustainable. We have increased funding for health care every year since 2001. In fact, in last February's budget, health care accounted for 95 percent of all new spending.

Even in the face of declining revenues, we are standing by those commitments. Today I can confirm that we are putting an additional \$2 billion into health care over three years. Of that total, \$1.3 billion will go to the health authorities for front-line services, \$145 million will go to Pharmacare, an additional \$52 million will support improvements to ambulance and telehealth services, and \$514 million more will go to the Medical Services Plan for physicians and lab services.

This spending is funded in part through a rise in MSP premium rates. In keeping with the Medicare Protection Act, rates will increase in January by \$3.50 a month for individuals and by \$7 a month for families. Premium assistance has also been enhanced, so those who qualify will be paying lower rates than they were in 2009.

As part of our plan to make the system sustainable, we are also allocating \$260 million over the coming two years to innovation, building on the successes we have already seen. For example, integrated health networks have been implemented provincially to provide a coordinated team-based approach to caring for people with multiple chronic health conditions. These conditions represent a growing share of health care costs, so everyone will benefit as we move to manage more efficiently.

Streaming projects in emergency departments is another example of innovation. They've reduced wait times by up to 50 percent, and we have a program in place to re-evaluate hospital practices with an eye to improving both efficiency and patient care.

Going forward, we will introduce additional innovations that improve patient care and reward performance

in health care delivery. We will tie specific revenue streams directly to health care funding.

Beginning in July, when the harmonized sales tax takes effect, we will dedicate every dollar of revenue from that tax to health care. We are also going to dedicate every dollar we receive from four other revenue sources, including Medical Services Plan premiums, tobacco taxes, lottery revenue dedicated to the health special account and health transfers that come from the federal government.

In the coming weeks government will introduce legislation mandating annual reporting to the Legislature, comparing health spending to the amounts of these five revenue streams. Health care is vital, but we cannot continue putting ever-growing shares of the total budget into this one area. We must make health care sustainable as part of our larger plan to get back to balanced budgets.

[1440]

Balancing a budget is more than just a financial imperative. It is a social imperative as well. As long as we are spending more than we are generating in revenue, we are living beyond our means. We are not just living beyond our means but beyond the means of future generations as well. In 2007, before the recession, British Columbia's annual revenues were almost \$40 billion. Revenues for the year just ended are almost \$3 billion lower, and it will be a number of years before they recover.

Clearly, if we want to get back to balanced budgets, we have to rein in overall spending and continue stepping up our efforts to encourage economic growth. We are expecting the B.C. economy to grow by 2.2 percent in 2010, by 2.3 percent in the following year and by 2.7 percent in 2012. As usual, these estimates are slightly below the average of the private sector forecasts, in keeping with our always prudent approach.

Government revenues will also start to recover over the next three years, largely due to expected improvements in demand and prices for natural resources. We expect revenue growth over the next three years to average 4.9 percent annually. In order to reach a balanced budget, we will limit spending growth to an annual average of 2.3 percent. That is possible, in part, because as we continue collective bargaining, the parties are working with a net zero increase wage mandate.

We will also realize savings of about \$320 million over three years by rationalizing common activities to refocus spending across five resource ministries: Forests and Range; Agriculture and Lands; Community and Rural Development; Energy, Mines and Petroleum Resources; and Transportation and Infrastructure.

The deficit for the year just ending is now projected to still be at \$2.8 billion. That is unchanged from the forecast in the September update, and we will be back to balanced budgets, as planned, in 2013.

In the meantime, we will achieve our budget deficit targets of \$1.7 billion in the year ahead, falling to \$945

million in the following year and down to \$145 million in the third year of our fiscal plan. To safeguard the plan, we are including a forecast allowance, or a cushion, of \$300 million in each of the next two years and \$400 million in 2012.

As we continue to accelerate investment in schools, hospitals, roads, bridges and other needed infrastructure, provincial debt will increase. However, because we have managed prudently and we've paid down debt when the budget was in surplus, taxpayer-supported debt as a portion of the total economy remains affordable.

The debt-to-GDP ratio is forecast to decline beginning in 2012, but even at its peak of 17.9 percent, the key measure of debt affordability still will be a full 3 points lower than it was in 2002. Once we return to balanced budgets, we will dedicate any surpluses directly to paying down the province's operating debt, a part of our long-term plan for a prosperous British Columbia.

This government has always been committed to building a stronger, more competitive economy. We know that with economic growth, with new jobs, new investment, British Columbia's potential for creating opportunity is unparalleled. Our people, our resources, our geography, our innovation — these are the strengths that we can leverage for the future, and we are doing precisely that to realize our vision for the economic future.

It is a future where children receive the best education possible, where families are supported and where business has incentives to invest in higher productivity; a future where communities are strong, where First Nations peoples participate as full partners and where resource industries are strengthened and revitalized with an increasing focus on value-added products.

It is a future where our clean energy expertise supports both our economy and our environment, and a future where people from around the world increasingly see our province as the best place where they can locate their business, raise their families and contribute to an even better quality of life.

[1445]

We have the potential, and we have a strong foundation. Since 2001 this government has invested billions of dollars in highways, ports and other infrastructure to open up our Pacific gateway and connect us to global markets. We have reduced the cost of doing business to amongst the lowest in the world. We have signed new treaties and forged new relationships with B.C.'s First Nations, creating new certainty for investment and development, and we have expanded trade and investment partnerships focusing on emerging economies.

In the year ahead we will implement the new harmonized sales tax, widely regarded as the single most important step government can take to strengthen our economy. As we complete this transition to the HST, we will continue working to ensure that it is applied fairly. For example, low- and modest-income British

Columbians will receive a new B.C. HST tax credit beginning this July, and British Columbians are benefiting from the increase in the basic personal income tax credit from \$9,373 to \$11,000 a year.

To help provide a level playing field for businesses and to follow the practice of other HST provinces, the tax on private sales of vehicles, boats and aircraft will continue, but at 12 percent. Overall, the HST will lower the tax on new investments by 40 percent, helping to create jobs and new opportunities in every region of the province and giving new momentum to our resource industries.

Mining, forestry, oil and gas — these are all essential to the health of our economy. They are poised for new growth as the world economy continues to recover, and with this budget we are taking steps to support their development. As the Premier announced in January, we are extending the B.C. mining flow-through share tax credit for another three years, to 2013. This will provide an added measure of certainty for the industry.

In forestry we are making good progress in all 29 recommendations put forward by the working round table. Those include expanding our commitment to a wood-first policy, showcasing B.C. wood as a climate-friendly building material with unprecedented global exposure prior to and during the Winter Olympics.

We're setting up a carbon offset credit program for reforestation. We have also helped to fund more than 20 global trade events linking buyers in Japan, South Korea, the U.S. and China with B.C. manufacturers of value-added wood products. We expect forestry revenue to increase by more than \$140 million in the year ahead, and we will continue to work with the industry to seek new value-added growth opportunities.

In the oil and gas sector we are seeing good results from the stimulus package the province announced seven months ago. It included a series of royalty incentives, all of which are fully supported in this budget. As a result of those initiatives and forecast improvements in the marketplace, we expect revenues from natural gas alone to increase by an annual average of 39 percent in the next three years, reaching more than \$1.2 billion by 2013.

Natural resources have always been the backbone of the B.C. economy, and like other industries, they benefit from a competitive investment environment. That includes a modern transportation system to move both people and goods efficiently. With this budget, we are allocating \$2.7 billion over three years to our transportation investment plan and leveraging an additional \$1.3 billion through federal cost-sharing and partnerships with the private sector, local governments and other agencies.

We are building on existing investments under the provincial transit plan, including additions to the bus fleets throughout British Columbia, rapid bus projects in Kelowna and in the Lower Mainland, and the Evergreen

rapid transit line linking Vancouver, Burnaby, Coquitlam and Port Moody. We expect construction of the Evergreen line to start in 2011, creating about 8,000 construction jobs and further adding to our quality of life.

[1450]

During the Olympic Games, TransLink ridership averaged more than 1.6 million people per day, including more than 200,000 on the Canada Line. That's more than twice the typical numbers, and that is part of our Olympic legacy. Many of those riders were local residents rediscovering the benefits of transit firsthand, and we expect significant numbers will stay with transit after the games, advancing the goal of our provincial transit plan to double ridership by 2020. That will be another step forward in making British Columbia the best place on earth to live, work and invest.

As the government committed in the throne speech, in the months ahead we will also redouble our efforts to simplify approvals for new investments and to build on our other advantages. The corporate income tax rate in B.C. is already among the lowest of the world's major industrialized economies. We have excellent infrastructure, a highly skilled workforce, a geographic location that makes our province the natural gateway to the Asia-Pacific. All of those factors make us competitive, and with this budget we are building an even greater competitive edge and setting the stage for a whole new decade of growth and prosperity.

First, we are taking steps to greatly expand B.C.'s potential as a hub for international commerce. This fast-growing sector is a major contributor to our economy, and with the global exposure we've earned from hosting the Olympics, the potential for further growth is enormous. We have a great opportunity right now to make B.C. a centre of excellence with world-leading expertise in a number of key growth areas.

With that in mind, we are amending the International Financial Activity Act, which offers incentives to companies doing international business, encouraging them to set up offices here in B.C. We will expand the range of activities that qualify for tax reductions under the act to include digital media distribution and publishing, clean technology, and carbon trading, all of which have enormous potential to boost our economy and generate jobs.

For example, British Columbia's digital media sector now employs more than 15,000 people. As government announced last month, we intend to put in place an interactive digital media tax credit that, along with our other ongoing tax credits, will position B.C. at the forefront of the convergence of film and digital media industries. Adding corporate tax incentives under the International Financial Activity Act will help take the sector to the next level, encouraging growth in the higher-profit distribution end of the value chain and helping B.C. companies expand their operations.

In terms of clean technology, the IFAA will provide incentives to international players to come to British Columbia, building on the achievements of our own homegrown businesses. They now employ about 18,000 people and contribute more than \$2 billion a year to our economy. The global market for environmental products and services is expected to double by 2020, and we have a chance to capture an even greater share of that market.

There is also huge growth potential in carbon trading. Since 2005 when we saw the beginning of a global cap-and-trade system, carbon transactions worldwide have been valued at well over \$100 billion. Analysts say that the market could be valued in the trillions when the U.S. government adopts cap-and-trade, and B.C. will be ready.

We have legislated targets for emission reductions. We have implemented a revenue-neutral carbon tax. We have committed to a carbon-neutral government and public sector, and we've begun to develop the province's wealth of clean energy resources.

We have also forged important international and regional partnerships, including ICAP, the International Carbon Action Partnership, whose goal is to reduce emissions worldwide by linking cap-and-trade systems. No other jurisdiction in North America has done as much, and with these changes to the IFAA and the new clean energy act that we plan to introduce this session, we will advance the government's commitment to become a world leader in the low-carbon economy of the future.

[1455]

With this budget we are also investing \$35 million more over three years for LiveSmart B.C. programs which provide financial support to households for energy audits and energy-efficient building retrofits. Tens of thousands of B.C. families are already benefiting from these programs, lowering their energy costs, reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and, at the same time, supporting economic growth.

In the coming months we will build on these advantages with residential smart meters, new smart grid investments and other initiatives to help reduce energy costs for all British Columbians.

To encourage further commercial development of new clean energy technologies, we are investing \$100 million over three years, building on the success of our innovative clean energy fund. To date, we have committed more than \$47 million to 34 projects and communities throughout B.C. in areas such as solar, wind, tidal, geothermal and bioenergy.

Finally, as announced in the throne speech, we will develop a comprehensive provincewide green energy strategy to harness the potential of British Columbia's clean energy resources, to generate wealth, create jobs and lower greenhouse gas emissions to help protect our quality of life for future generations.

Do you remember when B.C. first won the right to host the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games? It was 2003, and the games seemed so far away. It was hard to imagine that we would ever really get there. As the official preparation started, critics were quick to predict disaster. They suggested that no matter how much work or effort went into the games, the event was destined to fail in every imaginable way. The critics were wrong. Boy, were they wrong.

We still have the Paralympic Games to look forward to, but there is no longer any doubt that the 2010 Olympic Games have been successful beyond just about what anyone expected. Even VANOC officials say that they were unprepared for the outpouring of patriotism, camaraderie and the enthusiasm that made these games unlike any other.

Every British Columbian owns a piece of that success, and we have every reason to be proud. Just look at the firsts recorded by Canadian athletes. The first gold medal on home turf. The first gold medal in women's ski cross. The first gold in ice dancing. The first gold in women's bobsled, with a silver medal, too, for good measure.

Canadian athletes won gold more than at any other Winter Olympics and bettered the best medal count of any other Winter Games. That includes what many consider to be the ultimate victory: gold medals in both men's and women's hockey. And it happened right here in British Columbia.

Our games made history in other ways too, setting the standard for future host cities. Our games were the first in modern history to have every venue built a year in advance and on budget; the greenest Olympic Games, with venues and facilities showcasing leadership in areas such as clean energy and cutting-edge environmental design; and we were the first to include indigenous peoples as official host partners, setting what the four host First Nations have called a notable human rights precedent.

These are all remarkable achievements. Yet perhaps the greenest thing emerging from the games has been the least tangible. We have forged a new collective sense of who we are and what we can achieve and a new sense of what it means to be a Canadian and a British Columbian.

Every single one of us — spectators, volunteers, artists, performers, athletes, organizers — will carry memories of our Olympic Games for a lifetime. And we still have ten days of competition and celebration ahead of us.

Thinking back to when we won the right to host these games, it's been a long road. British Columbia has overcome countless challenges to get here. The road to economic recovery will also take some time to travel, but with prudent planning and careful management, we will get there.

[1500]

This budget represents the next step along the way, with new investment in health and education, new

support for children and families, a clear plan to balance the budget and new initiatives that build on our Olympic momentum to foster a stronger, more prosperous economy.

But we still have work to do. We won't get there overnight, but with this budget and working together with the people of British Columbia, we are on track to leave our children a legacy of hope, opportunity and, most important, confidence in the future of British Columbia.

B. Ralston: Today's budget makes it clear that the B.C. Liberals have no post-Olympic strategy to grow the economy and secure the recovery other than a multi-billion-dollar consumer tax, the HST, and cuts to key economic drivers like post-secondary education and training. It's only by taking what amounts to bribe money from the federal government for betraying British Columbians on the HST that the government has been able to hold the deficit to \$1.7 billion, which is seven times what they promised for this fiscal year during the election.

If any medals are to be delivered today, the B.C. Liberals should get a gold medal for distortion for now trying to claim that they are bringing in the HST in order to fund health care. The government's justifications for the HST betrayal get more frantic by the day. This document has nothing more than broken promises from a government that can't be trusted and has run out of steam.

To truly understand the depths of the B.C. Liberals' betrayal, we need to compare this budget with the one the government presented a year ago on the eve of an election. We first started learning the impact of the government's deceptions last summer, and today's budget digs the hole even deeper.

The B.C. Liberals promised to protect education, but today we learned that they have cut funding for K-to-12 education by \$14 million from what they promised before the election, even while they're downloading increased costs onto our schools. Our children are now being asked to pay the price as programs and services are cut.

The B.C. Liberals promised to protect health care, but wait times for procedures like MRIs have tripled over the last few months, and today's budget doesn't do anything to address that crisis. Patients and their families will be left waiting in pain even longer. The B.C. Liberals even promised that they wouldn't bring in the HST. We all know how that turned out — a surprise \$1.9 billion tax shift onto consumers announced after the election.

By the time we heard the government's budget update last September, there weren't very many people left in the province who still believed the B.C. Liberals' election promises. Maybe we shouldn't have been surprised. After all, this is a government that brought in a chil-

dren's budget that didn't do a thing for the thousands of families living in poverty, a housing budget that didn't build a single unit of affordable housing and a green budget with incentives promptly eliminated after the election.

Unfortunately, while British Columbians have learned that they cannot trust this government, the government certainly hasn't learned anything at all, because once again, the budget isn't honest. Simply put, it's a political document designed to justify cuts to public services.

Last year the B.C. Liberals misled the public about the size of the deficit. Then, after the election, they slashed education and health care to bring down a deficit they had claimed didn't even exist. B.C. families are paying the price for the B.C. Liberals' election betrayals with cuts to service and a multi-billion dollar tax shift.

Today the B.C. Liberals are continuing that trend as they scramble to sweep their broken promises under the rug by cutting public services. And now they are making an even bigger mess. After a decade in office the government can't be trusted, and at the very time that British Columbians are looking for leadership on the economy, the government has run out of ideas.

As we've seen time and time again, our economy is vulnerable to volatile world trends and so is our economic recovery. That's why it's crucial for governments to take a measured, steady approach if we're going to ensure our economy grows over the long term.

[1505]

This budget takes a decidedly shortsighted approach and fails to invest in our future. It is totally out of step with the approach other world economies are taking to emerge from the economic downturn.

If we accept the assertion that the current deficit is cyclical, not structural, then the approach this budget takes is wrong for an economy on the verge of recovery. At a time when we need to be investing in public education more than ever, with today's budget we'll see bigger classes, less support for students and layoffs of front-line staff. And at the time we need to be investing in the young people we'll be looking to as we create the jobs of tomorrow, today's budget has nothing for post-secondary and no investment in research and innovation.

The budget actually cuts student aid by 28 percent from what the B.C. Liberals promised last year — a huge blow that will make it even harder for families to send their children to post-secondary.

On the seventh anniversary of the heartlands budget, today the B.C. Liberals have nothing for rural British Columbia. It's a fundamental betrayal. Almost a decade into its mandate the government has nothing to offer our forest communities beyond trade shows and round tables.

British Columbians expect a government that will invest in people to secure our recovery and create jobs — smart investments in the future of our province, in our

children and our grandchildren to propel our economy into the future. This budget doesn't have any strategy to foster sustainable economic development and help create good-paying jobs.

While the B.C. Liberals are cutting funding for education, for post-secondary, for rural B.C., they are hiking funding for the government's spin shop, the public affairs bureau, by 2.5 percent over last year. It just goes to show how out of touch the B.C. Liberal government's priorities are from those of British Columbians.

British Columbians expect more. We need to focus on investing in our greatest resource, our people. Despite nearly a decade of mismanagement that has left our province deeply divided between rich and poor, rural and urban, we still have so much to offer: ethnic and cultural diversity, a highly skilled and talented workforce, natural resources that are the envy of the world over, and creative and innovative entrepreneurs.

But this budget fails the test. It doesn't leverage our wealth of diversity. It doesn't invest in the future. It doesn't ensure that we are creating the jobs and the business opportunities of tomorrow. Instead, the budget makes small businesses and families pay for the B.C. Liberals' broken promises with cuts to public service and a new regressive tax on consumers.

Rather than making the long-term investment we'll need to emerge from the downturn stronger, the budget is taking a decidedly short-term approach simply to cover up the B.C. Liberal government's own mistakes.

I'll have more to say about the budget tomorrow. In the meantime, I move adjournment of the debate.

B. Ralston moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

BILL 2 — BUDGET MEASURES IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2010

Hon. C. Hansen presented a message from His Honour the Administrator: a bill intitled Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2010.

Hon. C. Hansen: I move first reading of Bill 2, Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2010.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen: Bill 2 is divided into two parts. Part 1 contains the non-tax measures in the budget, and part 2 contains the tax measures.

Part 1 enables several initiatives that government included in the budget. The Members' Remuneration and

Pensions Act is amended to freeze the annual compensation for Members of the Legislative Assembly for two years.

The B.C. Railway Act is amended to transfer the government's shares in B.C. Rail to the B.C. Transportation Financing Authority.

The Homeowner Protection Act is amended to transfer responsibility for the reconstruction loan portfolio to the Ministry of Finance and oversight of the construction industry to the B.C. Housing Management Commission.

The Budget Transparency and Accountability Act and the Financial Administration Act are amended to provide Treasury Board the authority to determine the accounting and reporting framework for government organizations and to provide the comptroller general with new powers to enforce Treasury Board directives.

The University Act and the College and Institute Act are being amended to clarify the solvency provisions in those acts, and Bill 2 amends the Insurance Corporation Act to bring its provisions in line with government policy on how ICBC is to operate and how it is regulated.

[1510]

Bill 2 also has a number of non-tax housekeeping measures. The Financial Administration Act is amended to enable appropriate accounting for recoveries from a vote. The Financial Information Act is amended to remove an out-of-date reference to the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project Ltd., and the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act is amended to set the minimum number of measures of the Economic Forecast Council at ten.

Bill 2 also implements a number of tax measures announced in Budget 2010. The Home Owner Grant Act is amended to provide the new northern and rural benefit for up to \$200 for homeowners outside the Lower Mainland and the capital regional districts, effective for the 2011 property taxation year.

The Land Tax Deferment Act is amended to introduce, effective this year, the new property tax deferment program for homeowners with children. The School Act is amended, effective for the 2010 property tax year, to introduce the new 50 percent tax credit for land classified as farm and to increase the school tax credit for industrial properties to 60 percent from 50 percent.

The Income Tax Act is amended to increase and enhance provincial film tax credits and extend the B.C. mining flow-through share tax credit to the end of 2013. The Corporation Capital Tax Act is amended to repeal the financial institutions minimum tax. The Tobacco Tax Act is amended to clarify the calculation of the tax payable on cigars, increasing the maximum tax payable per cigar and to provide authority for an annual fee as a condition to sell tobacco in the province.

Various technical and administrative amendments are made to the Carbon Tax Act, to the Motor Fuel Tax Act,

the Property Transfer Tax Act, the Ports Property Tax Act, the Assessment Act, and the Tourism Accommodation (Assessment Relief) Act. Legislation to implement other budget tax measures will be introduced later this session.

I move that this bill be placed on the orders of the day for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 2, Budget Measures Implementation Act, 2010, introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Tabling Documents

Hon. C. Hansen: I have the pleasure to rise and table the *Budget and Fiscal Plan 2010/11-2012/13*, which fulfils the requirements of section 7 of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act.

I also table, on behalf of the ministers responsible, the government's overall strategic plan and the service plans required under the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act.

I have two packages that I will give to the Clerks. The first package contains a service plan for the Office of the Premier and 20 ministries. The second package contains the service plans for 28 Crown agencies. The second package also includes a list of organizations that are exempt from the service plan requirements under section 13 of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act.

In addition, to meet the requirements of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act, the second package identifies organizations that are receiving or losing exempt status, together with the reasons for these changes. Finally, the second package lists entities that have been included in the definition of education and health organizations for the purposes of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act.

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

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 3:14 p.m.

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