



First Session, 40th Parliament

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REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS  
(HANSARD)

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SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON

**FINANCE AND  
GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

**Trail**

**Tuesday, October 1, 2013**

**Issue No. 11**

DAN ASHTON, MLA, CHAIR

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**SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON  
FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

Trail  
Tuesday, October 1, 2013

*Chair:* \* Dan Ashton (Penticton BC Liberal)

*Deputy Chair:* Mike Farnworth (Port Coquitlam NDP)

*Members:*

- \* Mable Elmore (Vancouver-Kensington NDP)
- \* Eric Foster (Vernon-Monashee BC Liberal)
- \* Scott Hamilton (Delta North BC Liberal)
- \* Gary Holman (Saanich North and the Islands NDP)
- \* Marvin Hunt (Surrey-Panorama BC Liberal)
- \* Lana Popham (Saanich South NDP)
- \* Jackie Tegart (Fraser-Nicola BC Liberal)
- John Yap (Richmond-Steveston BC Liberal)

*\* denotes member present*

*Other MLAs:* Michelle Mungall (Nelson-Creston NDP)

*Clerk:* Susan Sourial

*Committee Staff:* Stephanie Raymond (Administrative Assistant)

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*Witnesses:*

- Abra Brynne (B.C. Food Systems Network; Food Secure Canada)
- Lorne Burkart (B.C. Nurses Union, West Kootenay Region)
- Dr. Neil Coburn (Selkirk College)
- Zachary Crispin (Selkirk College Students Union)
- Andy Davidoff (President, Kootenay Columbia Teachers Union)
- Brian Fry (ViaSport British Columbia)
- Suzanne Lehbauer (Executive Director, Castlegar Hospice Society)
- Gary Leier (Selkirk College)
- Joanna Maratta (Executive Director, British Columbia Touring Council)
- Alana Murdoch (Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy)
- Desneiges Profili (Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy)
- Jessie Renzie (B.C. Nurses Union, West Kootenay Region)
- Natalia Schwarz (Selkirk College Students Union)
- Donald Stevens (B.C. Alpine Ski Association)



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MINUTES

# SELECT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES



**Tuesday, October 1, 2013**  
**9 a.m.**  
**Columbia Room, Best Western Plus**  
**1001 Rossland Avenue**  
**Trail, B.C.**

**Present:** Dan Ashton, MLA (Chair); Mable Elmore, MLA; Eric Foster, MLA; Scott Hamilton, MLA; Gary Holman, MLA; Marvin Hunt, MLA; Lana Popham, MLA; Jackie Tegart, MLA

**Unavoidably Absent:** Mike Farnworth, MLA (Deputy Chair); John Yap, MLA

1. The Chair called the Committee to order at 9:00 a.m.
2. Opening Remarks by Dan Ashton, MLA, Chair.
3. The following witnesses appeared before the Committee and answered questions:
  - 1) Selkirk College Students' Union Natalia Schwarz
  - 2) Castlegar Hospice Society Zachary Crispin
  - 3) BC Alpine Ski Association; ViaSport Suzanne Lehbauer
  - 4) British Columbia Nurses' Union – West Kootenay Region Brian Fry
  - 5) Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy Donald Stevens
  - 6) Selkirk College Jessie Renzie
  - 7) Kootenay Columbia Teachers Union Lorne Burkart
  - 8) BC Touring Council Desneiges Profili
  - Alana Murdoch
  - Dr. Neil Coburn
  - Gary Leier
  - Andy Davidoff
  - Joanna Maratta
4. The Committee recessed from 10:36 a.m. to 10:43 a.m.
5. The following witness appeared before the Committee and answered questions:
  - 9) BC Food Systems Network; Food Secure Canada Abra Brynne
6. The Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair at 10:59 a.m.

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**Dan Ashton, MLA**  
**Chair**

**Susan Sourial**  
**Committee Clerk**





TUESDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2013

The committee met at 9 a.m.

[D. Ashton in the chair.]

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Good morning, everyone. Thank you very much for coming. We are the Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. This is an all-party parliamentary committee of the Legislative Assembly whose mandate includes conducting annual public consultations on the upcoming provincial budget.

We would like to welcome everybody in attendance today. Thank you very much for taking the time to attend. We really appreciate you participating in this important process.

Every year the Minister of Finance releases a budget consultation paper. The paper contains a fiscal and economic forecast and key issues that need to be addressed in the next budget. Once the consultation paper has been released, this committee is required to hold provincewide public consultations. All British Columbians are invited to provide input on the budget.

Following the consultations, the committee releases a report of the consultations, along with recommendations for the upcoming budget. This report must be presented to the Legislative Assembly no later than November 15.

There are several ways for British Columbians to participate. This hearing is one of 17 scheduled to take place throughout British Columbia in various communities. All British Columbians are invited to present at or attend the hearings. We have also scheduled video conference sessions for five additional communities. British Columbians can also participate in the consultation by sending a written submission, video file, letter or fax.

Information on the consultations, including instructions on how to make a submission, is available at our website at [www.leg.bc.ca/budgetconsultations](http://www.leg.bc.ca/budgetconsultations). The deadline for the submissions is October 16. All public input is carefully considered.

At today's meeting each presenter may speak for up to ten minutes. Up to five additional minutes are allotted for questions from the committee members. Time permitting, we may also have an open mike at the end of the session. Five minutes are allotted for each presentation. If you would like to register, please check with the nice young lady at the desk over there.

Today's meeting is a public hearing and will be recorded and transcribed by Hansard Services. A copy of this transcript, along with the minutes, will be printed and will be available on the committee's website. A live audio webcast is also broadcast through the website. The committee is also on Facebook and Twitter. On Facebook, you'll find us underneath the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia. On Twitter, we are at [twitter.com/BCFinanceComm](https://twitter.com/BCFinanceComm).

I will now ask the members of the committee to introduce themselves.

**J. Tegart:** Jackie Tegart, MLA, Fraser-Nicola.

**M. Hunt:** Marvin Hunt, Surrey-Panorama.

**S. Hamilton:** Good morning. Scott Hamilton, MLA, Delta North.

**E. Foster:** Eric Foster, MLA, Vernon-Monashee.

**M. Elmore:** Good morning. Mable Elmore, MLA for Vancouver-Kensington.

**G. Holman:** Gary Holman, MLA, Saanich North and the Islands.

**L. Popham:** I'm Lana Popham. I represent Saanich South.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Good morning. My name is Dan Ashton. I'm from Penticton. I'll be chairing the meeting today and working very closely with vice-Chair Mike Farnworth, who unfortunately couldn't be here today, and all the committee representatives and staff to ensure what is said today is forwarded to the government for proper consideration.

Also joining us today from the parliamentary committees office are some very, very hard-working and dedicated individuals — you are the second "very" in there — our Clerk, Susan Sourial, and Stephanie Raymond, who is staffing the front desk at the registration over there.

Also, two individuals that continue to amaze me with their ability to set up and pull down in shortening times as the tour marches along — Michael Baer and Alexandra Hursey, who are here on behalf of Hansard Services.

With that, I want to thank you very much for coming again this morning. Our first presentation is from Selkirk College Students Union. I have Zachary — please come forward — and Natalie. Is that correct?

**N. Schwarz:** Natalia.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Natalia — sorry.

I was noticing this morning that my eyeglasses were really fuzzy walking through town, so I'm going to blame it on my glasses.

**Z. Crispin:** It's probably the smelter.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** No. I have to say this. Our family was involved in Trail from the mid-'60s up until 2008. It's a community that rings in the bottom of my heart. It was amazing to walk around the community again last night

and this morning. It brings back a lot of actually really fond memories of this area.

You have ten minutes. I'll give you a two-minute warning, and we have five minutes for questions. The floor is yours.

[0905]

### Presentations

**N. Schwarz:** Good morning. Before I begin, I would acknowledge the Sinixt people, on whose unceded territory we are here today.

My name is Natalia Schwarz. I am the federation representative for the Canadian Federation of Students Local 4, Selkirk College Students Union. This is Zachary Crispin. He is a long-time Selkirk College Students Union representative, and he's here today to assist me.

I would like to begin by thanking the committee for hearing our presentation today and note our appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this process. Our students union represents more than 2,300 students at Selkirk College. We study in six communities across the West Kootenay region, including here in Trail.

The students union exists to advocate for our members, to provide services that assist in making students' lives easier and to secure the recognition of the legitimate role students play in institutional and civil democracy. Additionally, the students union is mandated by its members to advocate for a system of post-secondary education that is accessible, of high quality and rationally planned. It is for this reason that I come before the committee.

Our organization would like to advance the following suggestions: (1) that the government increase core funding to colleges and universities to 2001 levels, adjusting for inflation; (2) that tuition fees be reduced to 2001 levels; (3) that the interest on student loans be eliminated; and finally, that a system of non-refundable upfront student grants be instituted.

The first issue I'd like to discuss is funding for B.C.'s colleges and universities. You've likely heard about the ongoing issue of underfunding from other student organizations, faculty and administrators. Public funding for Selkirk College continues to fall short of the institution's and students' needs. In fact, per-student funding is less today than the 2001 levels across the province, when accounting for inflation, leading to programs being cut last year at Selkirk College.

Second-year science and second-year fine arts programs have been slashed in the West Kootenays. The Kootenay Studio Arts campus in Nelson is now providing an education that reflects a great dumbing down of former programs. This year the massive funding gap will likely lead the board of governors to consider further program cuts. The chronic underfunding at Selkirk College has caused students to leave the area, which not

only hurts the local economy but furthers deterioration of the college.

This new government has an opportunity to differentiate itself from the destructive course set for education by previous leaders. By funding colleges and universities at levels more close to those of 2001 with inflationary increases, the system could be alleviated of significant budget strain. Without this, these issues could only get worse.

The declining government funding in universities and colleges also fuels increases in tuition fees. Tuition fees in B.C. increased from an average of \$1,727 in 1999 to an average of \$5,029 this year. There is a whopping 300 percent increase in only one generation. In comparison to other provinces from 2001 until now, B.C. went from having tuition fees 30 percent below the national average to now surpassing that average by 10 percent.

There is ample evidence that financial barriers are the most significant obstacle to many people achieving entry to colleges and universities. I am not going to repeat any of the data that has already been presented by the Canadian Federation of Students-B.C. in support of that fact. The data is clear, well-researched and already on the record. For this reason, we urge the committee to recommend that tuition fees be progressively reduced to 2001 levels.

I would like now to turn to the issue of student debt. At an average of over \$37,000 upon graduation from a four-year program, B.C. has the highest rate of student debt in Canada. It is important to know that this figure only includes public student loan debt, since private student debt may be significantly higher.

Members should be aware that following graduation, student loan borrowers pay interest on their public student loans substantially above this government's borrowing cost. Members may not be aware that every province except Saskatchewan charges a lower interest rate on student loans than B.C.

[0910]

As you know, students with higher debt levels upon graduation pay more for their education through higher interest rates than those who have had to borrow less or nothing in order to get their education. Based on a ten-year amortization rate, the amount of interest that low-income and in-need students pay is, on average, about \$8,000.

A system in which lower- and middle-income students are expected to pay more for the same education than those who can afford to pay up front is fundamentally inequitable. By keeping interest rates as high as they are, the government is penalizing those students and their families with the least amount of financial resources.

Meanwhile, in terms of the impact on the provincial treasury, the annual cost of the complete elimination of interest on student loans is negligible. Accordingly, we ask that the committee recommend that the government

immediately eliminate interest charged on government student loans to ensure that those who can least afford an education no longer have to pay the most for it.

Not only is B.C.'s rate of interest higher than the average, but B.C. is the last among all provinces in provision of non-repayable student financial aid, at about 60 percent below the national average. Given B.C.'s relative wealth as a province, it is not reasonable that we are lagging so far behind other provinces in provision of support for low- and middle-income students.

But it isn't even about where we run in the pack. Students with debt under \$10,000 are significantly more likely to complete their program than those with more debt. In fact, the completion rate for those with debt over \$10,000 is only 34 percent. We ask that the committee recommend the creation of a provincial non-repayable, upfront grant system.

The issues of institutional funding, over-inflated tuition fees and skyrocketing student debt are presented here together because they are tied to each other. Cuts in funding create pressures to increase tuition fees, which in turn increase student debt. This means that our universities and colleges are pushed to privatization and that students are pushed into debt.

As I noted before, the mandate of our students union is to promote a post-secondary education system that is organized, accessible and of high quality. In contrast, in B.C. we have created a system that does not meet either of the first standards and will inevitably fail to meet the third.

The recommendations presented today — reducing tuition fees, increasing institutional funding, eliminating student loan interest and offering more non-repayable student aid — are not final solutions to the issues facing our post-secondary education system, but they are the beginning of a process to reverse the erosion of this system that started decades ago and will take the commitment of all those involved in the post-secondary education system to ensure its success.

Therefore, we ask that the committee members come together and demonstrate the foresight and leadership needed to change the course of our public colleges and universities for the better.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to your questions.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Natalia, thank you very much. Good presentation — and Zachary also.

Questions from the committee.

**L. Popham:** Thanks for your presentation. Nice to see you this morning. I noticed on your website that you're doing a survey, and you're asking students to tell you how they're funding their studies. You list "government student loans," "private loans," "parents," "working" and "other." Do you know how those statistics are showing at this point?

**Z. Crispin:** The figures from that survey.... Often folks will put in "student loans," and often they'll put in "funding from their parents." But what we've found is that when our members come into our office on campus and we have a discussion about the issue, they often suggest to us that it's a combination of private loans, of student loans and of funding from parents, because without that, they wouldn't have the support necessary to get in the door or to continue their education.

**J. Tegart:** Good morning. I'm just wondering. You're asking about dollar amounts to the 2001 level. Just for your institution, what would that cost?

[0915]

**Z. Crispin:** We don't have the figures on what it would cost just for Selkirk College. We haven't crunched the numbers on what the institution's budget looked like when I was — what? — 11. We'd be happy to go back and look at that if the folks on the committee would like that information.

But really, trying to get to 2001 levels, progressively reducing tuition fees and increasing funding to those levels.... The government should have those figures. It shouldn't be that difficult to dig it up in your records.

**M. Elmore:** Thanks for your presentation. We've heard a consistent message in terms of students being squeezed around affordability and limiting access to post-secondary education.

My question has to do with.... We heard from Cranbrook that a number of students had to.... If they want to further pursue their education, because of the lack of a university in the region, they're going to either Lethbridge or Calgary or other areas.

Where do students, when they want to pursue their studies, go from Selkirk?

**N. Schwarz:** Students from Selkirk mainly end up going to the Island, to UVic, UBC, Simon Fraser, from what I know.

**Z. Crispin:** This is true. One of the issues now at Selkirk College is that because so many second-year programs have been cut, the ability to transfer to those institutions is limited. That in a lot of ways is entirely deviating from the original purpose of the community college system in British Columbia, which is to allow people their first two years at university in the region from which they come.

**N. Schwarz:** Some students, with the second-year science cuts, have had to transfer to Okanagan College to finish their associate of science in order to transfer further.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Any other questions?

Thank you very much for the presentation. Have a good day.

Next up we have Castlegar Hospice Society — Suzanne. Good morning. How are you today?

**S. Lehbauer:** Good morning. I'm well, thank you. Thank you for seeing me this morning. I was here last year, and a lot of what I'm saying today will be the same as it was last year, because we're still facing the same issues.

Before I start, I'd just like to say: raise your hand if you don't think you're ever going to die. So we're all on the same page here.

What is hospice palliative care? Well, it really is the great equalizer. Most of us share a common hope that when death comes to us or a loved one, it will be peaceful. In a perfect world we would be surrounded by loved ones, be safe, well cared for, comfortable and pain-free. When our life is complete, we want our friends and families to receive the support they need to work through their grief.

Hospice palliative care is aimed at relief of suffering and improving the quality of life for persons who have a life-threatening illness. So it goes from cure to care. Hospice is an attitude, a concept of care. We live until the moment of death. When illness is no longer responsive to treatment, hospice palliative care provides the physical, emotional, spiritual and practical support needed.

I've been with the Castlegar Hospice Society just over six years now. My background is in counselling, business and public relations. Then I went on and took training at Victoria Hospice.

Being with hospice started as a job for me. It has now turned into a passion. Not only has it changed the way I think about dying; it has really changed the way I think about living. So if I get passionate today, you'll understand why.

Who is Castlegar Hospice, and what do we do? It was originally founded in 1985 with the first hospice-training program beginning in 1988 and the grief support group in 1989. We are a professionally administered, volunteer-driven organization whose unique function is to provide essential health care services in the form of one-to-one companionship and support to those who are at their life's end journey, as well as providing support to their loved ones.

The society is an integral part of a total care team that may include other health care professionals, social workers and spiritual workers. We are truly a unique organization, in that we are there for 100 percent of the community.

[0920]

Castlegar Hospice operates on a without-borders policy so that all the services and educational programs are available to anyone in our region. And believe me, we can go toe to toe with any of the hospice organizations on the coast in terms of our programs. We just don't have

the funding that they do.

I'm also proud that Castlegar Hospice is thought of as a mentor in our region. Our volunteer workers and myself offer a tremendous value-added component to the traditional health care delivery system. Our volunteer workers come from a variety of backgrounds — from the health care system, social workers — and they are extensively trained to meet provincial standards of care.

Although we only receive approximately 12 percent of our yearly budget from the Interior Health Authority, in 2012 we raised 88 percent of our budget from the local community and grants to support our programs and services. We provided more than 6,000 recorded hours of volunteer service which, if you cost out at the very minimal \$16.50 per hour, translates to just under \$100,000 in donated labour.

We delivered community education in the form of advance-care planning, grief and bereavement seminars, end-of-life training for health care professionals, and spoke with community organizations on the work of hospice. I administer programs such as our weekly grief walk and support group, Bereavement Buddies; individual grief support, and of course we help people navigate through that maze that is our health care system.

We've developed solid community partnerships that have minimized duplication of services. Just recently I have gone on to the West Kootenay Suicide Prevention, Intervention and Postvention committee. We provide grief training not only for the members of the committee but also for clients. If the health care system had to pay for the services provided just by Castlegar Hospice Society, the cost would be well over \$250,000 per year. It makes good business sense to support community-based hospices.

Have you heard about the silver tsunami? Well, it's arrived, and it isn't going anywhere. Of course, that refers to the baby boomers who are reaching retirement age at a fast pace. B.C. statistics tell us that in 2011 our population experienced about 35,000 deaths. Research tells us that each death has a serious impact on at least five people. Hospice programs allow patients to gain more control over their lives, but only about 20 percent of all Canadians have access to these services. It's even less in rural communities.

Only about 10 percent of us will die suddenly. The other 90 percent will decline gradually and, depending on the services available, may or may not die where they want and will experience various levels of pain and ability. If we don't act now, what care will there be in ten to 15 years? What care is there today for people in need?

There's a growing trend among Canadians to want to die at home. This means that the issue of caregiving in Canada is urgent. With the devolution of care to the community and home, families are facing an increased burden to care for loved ones with little formal support.

About 26 percent of Canadians have cared for a loved

one in the past year. Over 20 percent had to take one month or more off work, and over 40 percent used personal savings. As a result, eight out of ten family caregivers reported suffering emotional difficulties and depression. Seven out of ten reported needing respite, and over 50 percent reported financial difficulties and weaker physical strength.

As one of our clients, suffering exhaustion from taking care of her husband, said to me: "I feel like I'm failing, because I can't be a wife to my husband while he's dying because I'm so tired from taking care of him." What a tragedy. As well, there are those who are forced to care for a loved one at home because there is not a bed available at a facility, they cannot afford private care, and there isn't a hospice facility. How can we support our families and our communities? Well, where we live should not determine the kind of end-of-life care we receive.

[0925]

Yet an analysis of provincial capital hospice expenditures shows that rural B.C. has not received its fair share of funding compared to urban centres, specifically the Lower Mainland. You can imagine how we felt, after being told there is just no money left for hospices in rural communities, \$8 million to \$10 million is given to hospices on the Lower Mainland. While we don't begrudge our fellow hospices that money, we would love to see some of it coming into the rural communities.

We're facing a challenge in our community, our region and our province. How can we ensure that everyone has the right care at the right time at the right place and, of course, at the right price? Imagine knowing that you are dying, you have very little time left, and you have no place to go. We need to look at the training and education of those not necessarily in the medical profession to enable them to meet the needs at the end of life.

We need to support organizations that strive to have residential hospice facilities in their community. We need to look at what programs are in place to support caregivers and patients who choose to stay at home to die, and we need to look at creative partnering.

Castlegar Hospice Society. Well, we have a goal for the future. We may be small, but we're mighty in our goal to ensure that everyone has a good death. We have worked collaboratively with other hospice societies in our region, as well as funding agencies, members of our local palliative team and our local government, to provide inclusive barrier-free regional programs and services as well as analyzing where the gaps in our programs and services lie.

The city of Castlegar, in my report I say, is in the process of donating two pieces of land to Castlegar Hospice for the purpose of establishing a hospice centre for this region. We were just notified a week ago that they are donating two pieces of land in Castlegar, approximately 1.15 acres, to the Castlegar Hospice Society for the specific purpose of establishing a regional hospice centre. That's

very big news for us.

I'd like to respectfully thank you for your time in allowing me to make this presentation on behalf of those who so often cannot speak for themselves. B.C. is rightly touted as the best place on earth to live. Together we can ensure it's also the best place to die. I thank you very much for your time.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Suzanne, thank you.  
Questions? Comments?

**S. Lehbauer:** I have one copy of our business plan that I'll leave here with Stephanie.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thank you. That would be great.

**S. Lehbauer:** It is being updated as we now have received the land, which is exciting. But I would like you to take a look at it as well.

**G. Holman:** Thank you for your presentation. I wanted to explore the funding inequity that you described. Does that apply to both capital and operating, in your view?

**S. Lehbauer:** Yes. We would be looking, of course, to the health authority for some operational funding.

**G. Holman:** And for the facility that you're planning on building, have you been talking to the health authority about a capital contribution?

**S. Lehbauer:** We've only had beginning talks with them.

**G. Holman:** I guess I'm just trying to get clear on the nature of the inequity. Is it mainly on the capital side, so that you're not getting capital dollars, whereas you see the Lower Mainland and other areas getting capital dollars?

**S. Lehbauer:** Well, we're seeing that we're not getting the operational funds that we're looking for. Also, we shouldn't have to wait this long to get a hospice facility in this region.

One of the quotes in our business plan from a survey that we did throughout the region is from a couple who lived in Castlegar. They had to move to Kelowna because of the lack of medical and palliative care services here. That shouldn't be happening.

Of course, every community would love to have their own hospice facility. That's not going to work. It's certainly financially not fiscally responsible. That's why we looked at one for our region, looking at ten beds for not only hospice but also respite and pain management.

In order to get pain management, again, you have to go to Kelowna from here in Trail or wherever.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** I'm really running out of time. I'm sorry. We have two other questions, so I apologize. We have two minutes left.

**E. Foster:** So you don't have a facility right now. Is that correct?

[0930]

**S. Lehbauer:** We do not have a facility right now. In Castlegar we have two hospice beds in our long-term-care facility.

**E. Foster:** All right. Now, of course, I haven't seen your business plan. Do you have any money towards the new facility you want to build?

**S. Lehbauer:** Right now we are just starting to go after the funding for capital costs.

**E. Foster:** Okay. I was involved with the fundraising at the North Okanagan Hospice — I still am, actually — and the majority of that money was raised outside of government. Now, IH pays most of the cost of the operation.

**S. Lehbauer:** It's about 70 percent that they pay for your....

**E. Foster:** I can go through the whole budget for you if you like. But the actual daily operation.... And they will, pretty much everywhere you go. So you need to raise the money to build the building and get going.

**S. Lehbauer:** Yes.

**E. Foster:** What's your number? What are you looking at for the ten beds?

**S. Lehbauer:** It's \$3.1 million.

**E. Foster:** Okay, that's not too bad then. And you've got the land now?

**S. Lehbauer:** We have the land. We also have partnerships established with Selkirk College, so it would be a teaching facility as well.

**E. Foster:** You know, when we built the addition on the one in Vernon, we got a huge amount of in-kind from all the contractors around. So good luck with it.

**M. Elmore:** Thanks for your presentation. Castlegar Hospice Society — how big is the region that you cover?

**S. Lehbauer:** We just cover Castlegar and area, but as I said, not all of the hospices in our region offer the services that we do. So we have people coming from Salmo

or Trail to participate in our grief and bereavement services or to take training.

If anyone has any further questions, you have my e-mail and my phone number. I'd be more than thrilled to talk with you.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Gary, you've got 30 seconds. Do you want to finish?

**G. Holman:** What's the size of your budget — the dollar budget?

**S. Lehbauer:** Our current budget is \$100,000 for our small....

**G. Holman:** And IHA provides 12 percent of it?

**S. Lehbauer:** Yes, 12 percent.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thank you very much. I apologize that we just have to keep everybody on time.

**S. Lehbauer:** I know. Thank you. I will leave this at the front.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Perfect.

B.C. Alpine Ski Association — Brian and Donald. Welcome, gentlemen. So ten minutes for the presentation. I'll give you a two-minute warning, and as you can see, questions will be asked.

**B. Fry:** Thank you to the committee for letting us present today, and thanks to the provincial government for all the previous sport funding.

Don and I are volunteers. We're not part of B.C. Alpine or ViaSport — just so you understand. A little bit of background on Don and me. I'm Brian Fry. This is Don Stevens. We are former alpine ski racers — Red Mountain Racers, quite a famous ski club, actually — provincial ski team members, and alpine and Canada ski team members as well. Don went so far as to represent us at two world championships — the Olympics and a World Cup medallist, as well. He's very, very successful.

We're parents of ski racers. We're former Red Mountain Racers board members — club presidents. We're also board members and founders of a very unique ski academy which has gone on to be much more than a ski academy — a way of education for sports and arts. Don is the senior mechanical engineer at Tech Today, and I'm the co-founder and senior vice-president at RackForce, which is Canada's largest cloud service provider.

I'll let Don talk a little bit about why we're here and the importance of sport in the Kootenays.

**D. Stevens:** As Brian said, my name is Don Stevens. I'll talk about why we're here and the importance of sport

in the Kootenays.

Brian and I grew up here in the Kootenays, competing in various sports when we were young and finally focusing on alpine ski racing. We feel that sport is a fantastic base for a healthy, successful life. People in the Kootenays are passionate about sports and the outdoors for both themselves and their children.

The Kootenays have been a great environment for sport. On the alpine side, we have world-class alpine facilities just right outside our back door. The Kootenays have had a long, successful tradition in sports. We look at hockey, for example, with multiple NHL players coming out of the Kootenays. Trail alone had the 1939 and 1961 world champion hockey teams here. If you look at baseball, Trail has Jason Bay, who plays in the major league right now. And Andy Bilesky was the person who developed the Canadian Little League champions out of Trail.

[0935]

If you look at alpine skiing — a little closer to us — Sen. Nancy Greene-Raine and Kerrin Lee-Gartner were both Olympic medallists that come from Rossland. Kerrin actually grew up across the street from Nancy's childhood home.

Out of the Kootenays we've had two World Cup titles, three world championship titles, 40-plus members on the national alpine ski team and over 33 World Cup medals.

You look at Kootenay alpine racing programs and the main focus is club development, from five-year-old children right up to alpine national ski team members. We focus on building skills, confidence, education models supportive of sport, mentors and coaches. We build winners and, ultimately, build successful human beings.

**B. Fry:** I'll take over from here.

What's interesting is that we have a real history of winners in sport, but probably even more important is that we have all these athletes who come back to be sport leaders, coaches, mentors and very successful human beings. Just a quote from the Right to Play: "Sports' unique and universal power to attract, motivate and inspire makes it a highly effective tool for engaging and empowering individuals, communities and even countries to take action to improve their health."

Don and I, as parents and former athletes, can look back to see the skills we've learned: the ability to learn discipline and drive; physical preparation; mental preparation; dealing with results, whether you lose or even if you win, which can actually be even be more challenging; learning what risk is all about, the fact that risk is really important and that you must know how to push limits at the right time; goal-setting; learning how to travel and be independent; lifelong friendships and relationships; and learning about other cultures, which is really important, coming from a smaller rural region like this.

Don and I are surrounded by proof of success in the

sport. For our children, we use our experiences from sport to teach lessons. As parents we can relate sports to our children for future activities that they might get involved in.

I want to mention an experience this summer. My son had the chance.... As a ski racer, he was asked to go and guide a visually impaired athlete who was missing his guide. He went in four World Cups and won one of the World Cups with this visually impaired athlete and got to see through the eyes of a visually impaired athlete. They're on radio, so they're talking back and forth. It's just a fascinating experience that you could hardly imagine and that he would not have had without sport.

Don and I are surrounded by a number of success stories, people who are very successful in our sport and other sports. Just some titles: one's a VP at West Fraser Timber today. One's a corporate leader in coaching and consulting for major corporations today.

Numerous business owners. One was the VANOC alpine manager at the 2010 Olympics. One's a sport broadcaster at CBC. The others ones are engineers and professionals like Don, and successful coaches. One is producing many new World Cup athletes. Some of the coaches that we worked with have even been inducted into the hall of fame.

**D. Stevens:** I'll speak on behalf of B.C. Alpine. B.C. Alpine is responsible for alpine skiing, athletic and education programming in B.C. It provides leadership in athletic development that is consistent with the long-term athletic development model adopted across Canada. Education programming focuses on coach and officials training, with safety being a very high priority.

B.C. Alpine has a dedicated club development coordinator to work with all the clubs, enhancing coach education and youth development. The goal is to have all the young participants exposed to a variety of sports, helping to create year-round activity through a number of different sports. The multi-sport initiative will help with recruitment and retention for all youth in the community.

B.C. Alpine has dedicated staff to work exclusively with education, which leads with sustainability across B.C.

The provincial government funding supports the core of the sport. Some recent funding has been dedicated to improving the quality of race runs in Panorama near Invermere, where B.C. Alpine will be hosting the disabled world championships in 2015. The improvement will create a legacy for all ski racers in B.C. and Canada. This new facility will allow us to train and compete at home in Canada, giving us the home field advantage in early season training that will be cost-effective. The sport development and economic impact will be greatly enhanced through this initiative.

We are also very proactive in getting our corporate partners to support our sport. We generate almost 25 per cent of our revenue through corporate sponsors, where

companies such as Teck and Rio Tinto Alcan provide very significant revenue. These companies see investment in sport and youth as a valuable investment. With over 5,000 members, we are fortunate to have a club at every resort.

B.C. Alpine will be hosting over 120 events this season. Whistler will be hosting the Canadian championships and the Whistler Cup, which is a large international juvenile ski race in the world, with over 400 participants coming from 22 countries.

Not only do we build great ski racers but the dedication, discipline and commitment learned through our sport helps translate to future British Columbians' success.

[0940]

**B. Fry:** With that, I'd like to talk on behalf of ViaSport. B.C. Alpine is a prime example of the support of a new vision for sport in B.C. All provincial sport organizations are really coming together to provide a unified and effective system for sport delivery. The sector as a whole has worked hard to become more efficient and to restructure and eliminate duplication and to reduce administrative cost.

So ViaSport is an umbrella organization that has been established to lead this vision. It's creating a multi-year strategy to increase participation in sport and physical activity through partnerships and consultation and ensuring that funding is distributed in a way that makes the most impact.

This new shared approach for Sport B.C. means clarity in sport-related granting, in streamlined processes; more centralized communication; and better tracking, which means that you can now evaluate trends and see an evidence base showing the value of sport. You also have systems in place that show the value-add for sport and increased opportunities to leverage dollars.

Again, we'd like to thank you for the funding that's already been received in past years. We're not asking the committee to increase funding. Instead we're requesting the same amount of funding from the government that's been received in the past.

What's important is that now it becomes a multi-year investment, which will help in longer-term sport planning. This will, in turn, bring increased consistency and the ability for sport to create a multi-year sport strategy, which is so important; offer the ability to leverage other sport funding opportunities; better sustain programming that has been proven successful; and strengthen infrastructure for sport in our province for years to come.

We'd like to thank the committee again for the opportunity to be here today.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Brian and Don, thank you very much for coming today.

**L. Popham:** Thanks for your presentation. It's great to see you. I'm an ex-carded racer from Mount Washington. One of your colleagues, Stan Hanson, was my coach — part of the Red Mountain Racers.

**B. Fry:** Small world. So he's exactly.... Part of our team.

**L. Popham:** Yeah, I know. So it's great to see you, and I just wanted to let you know that I believe in the power of sport. It was such an incredible part of my childhood. Thanks for presenting today.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Any other comments?

Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming. I'm a little bit older than all of you, and I came from Apex. We always envied Granite and Red, combined. We still did produce a lot of good people out of Apex.

**B. Fry:** Apex has become a very fundamental part of this sport as well, because it's got a great downhill course. It takes volunteers, so it's a phenomenal part of the sport as well.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Actually, the MacDonald girl is on her way to south Mexico right now. She raced at Apex and then was at the University of Alaska on a full-time scholarship. I just talked to her two days ago, and she's pedalling her bike down to central Mexico. I thought that was kind of cool.

**L. Popham:** All right. Well, we have Alison Forsyth.

**J. Tegart:** I come from Ashcroft, and we don't have a hill.

I want to mention that we've seen lots of presentations and certainly some sports organizations, and it's great to hear how sport is coming together. There are so many different sport events, but to hear that sport is coming together and looking at coaching and duplication and those kinds of things is really encouraging when you're sitting at this table. So congratulations.

**B. Fry:** Thank you, Jackie. Yeah, the overlap is definitely there, and it's great to solve that problem.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Gentlemen, thanks for coming today. Have a great day. See you in a bit.

We have Jessie and Lorne next. Please come forward. Good morning. Thanks for coming. The presentation is ten minutes — I'll give you a two-minute warning — and then five minutes for questions when required. I don't know who is starting....

**L. Burkart:** Thank you for having us. My name is Lorne Burkart. I'm the regional chairperson for the West Kootenay region of the B.C. Nurses Union. I am an ICU



nurse. I work in Trail and live in Castlegar.

**J. Renzie:** Hi, I'm Jessie Renzie. I'm an actively working nurse. I'm also the lobby coordinator for the West Kootenay region of the B.C. Nurses Union. In this role I advocate for health care and nurses. I do this because I'm passionate about our publicly funded health care system.

I've worked in health care for 27 years, and 22 of those years I've been an RN. In that time I have worked mostly in small hospitals in outposts. For the last few years I have been employed at the outpost hospital in Kaslo.

I'm here to talk to you about what is happening in health care in my community in this region and why the Finance Committee should consider health care a priority in rural communities. I will also try to address the consequences of not doing so, especially here in the West Kootenay region.

Right now, for example, according to news releases and other sources, the Interior Health Authority has decided to reduce emergency services to Kaslo. The nurses have not yet been informed by IHA about any reduction in emergency room hours. If this reduction occurs, as it appears it will, it will result in hardship to the members of that community and those who live in the many outlying communities which are serviced by the Kaslo hospital.

[0945]

Losing 24-7 emergency service in Kaslo would reduce the ability to triage and stabilize patients with medical emergencies. The loss of these services will result in patients having to travel to Nelson or Trail by either private vehicle or the provincial Ambulance Service. Those patients may then require more critical intervention, and the delay in providing services may result in increased complications and death.

Rural emergency departments fill an important role in rural health care, and not just with large traumas. As it is well documented, these are only a small percentage of the late-night admissions to emergency departments.

I wish to speak to lesser emergencies, such as sick children at 2 a.m.; seniors who have fallen and fractured hips, arriving in excruciating pain; motor vehicle accidents where patients need to be treated and stabilized prior to ambulance transfer to other hospitals sometimes hours away; cardiac patients needing immediate treatment to prevent further damage to their hearts and health; sometimes such things as a follow-through with patients who have been called by the family doctor after hours with abnormal lab results that may require immediate intervention. I have many other examples.

The B.C. Minister of Health states that British Columbia also faces a challenge in ensuring that all parts of society and all populations can access health care services and enjoy good health. However, the Premier has made her health care objectives clear to Health Minister Terry Lake. In a mandate letter she instructed him to innovate and find savings throughout the system.

Budgeting. In B.C. we're experiencing historic lows in health care spending. This year's provincial health care budget provides for an increase of only 2.31 percent to the Ministry of Health, 2.38 percent in 2014-2015 and 2.72 percent in 2015-2016. The health authorities are limited to increase this at 2.56 percent in the upcoming year, 2.32 percent in 2014-2015 and only 2.11 percent in 2015-2016.

Nurses know how to innovate and find savings. We are the folks who work in the system 24-7. We know there are enormous inefficiencies in the system. We see it every day in the management and administration of the health care system. That is why we ask for our voices to be heard. We can help the government provide better care and save money.

One helpful solution for rural health care is for the Finance Committee to instruct Interior Health to consider all models of care, including the use of nurse practitioners, promotion of Nurse First Call and remote-nursing practice certification for RNs in order to maintain 24-7 service in Kaslo and other small hospitals.

For example, a remote-nursing certificate enables nurses to diagnose and treat minor acute illnesses. This will help reduce the dependence on doctors for overnight emergency care. I have included an information handout from CRNBC — that's our professional body — on what these expanded roles entail.

In fact, these very recommendations were made in the Ross report, an independent review of Kaslo's ER problems which was solicited and paid for by Interior Health, yet Interior Health has either ignored or refused to implement them. Dr. Ross also concluded that Kaslo's ER needs to remain open 24-7. I've also included a copy of his report for your viewing.

The jobs of the community nurses and the public health nurses are all about creating healthy communities and preventing disease, which could result in the long-term reduction of health care costs.

Crawford Bay, a local rural community, just recently lost its community nurse due to restructuring in the IHA. She lived in this community, thus saving the system travelling time. IHA decided to service the community through its Nelson office, resulting in 2½ hours travelling to the community. The result is that the residents requiring care have less service hours and no continuity of service, as they often see new nurses. This small community sent approximately 400 letters of protest and concern to your government, with no resolution to this issue.

IHA's story of why these changes have occurred is very different from both the community and the nurses' perspective. The evidence on this is very clear. Community health care is far cheaper than acute care. If people are given adequate home support and follow-up, it stops this expensive cycle from repeating and, more importantly, prevents a downward spiral of health issues for the patient.

Nursing support must be available in small communities. It is not. In Kaslo, like other small communities with few services, we see patients sent home from the hospital too early. They often return to the emergency room needing care, sometimes due to an unforeseen complication. Other times patients are having problems after hours and need help with teaching on issues like wound or catheter care. Unfortunately, these issues were not properly done, due to high workload at other hospitals.

Other times early discharge and a lack of community care are contributing factors if patients are ill enough to need readmission to an acute care facility. This leads not only to a further overburdened system but to financial and personal costs as well.

Research shows that care immediately preceding death is the most costly. To address this, we could implement a tried-and-true primary health care model for seniors willing and able to be supported in their own homes, which is both cost-effective and honours the individual. There are programs that have been shown to work, but nursing support must be available. In small communities it is not.

[0950]

You may be aware that some reforms, changes which provide actual cost savings, have already been agreed to by the Health Ministry but are not being implemented by the health authorities. For example, overtime, sick days, wellness and return-to-work programs eat a huge chunk of the province's health care budget. It gets worse when staff is subject to high stress and a heavy workload.

In 2012 the BCNU negotiated a collective agreement with the government aimed at reducing overtime and providing for excellent patient care, but it requires a full implementation of the language. That is not being honoured by IHA or the other health authorities. The Finance Minister needs to ensure that the collective agreement is funded so that nurses who are on vacation or leave are replaced, nurses who are sick are replaced and additional nurses are brought in when patient load rises unexpectedly.

If the language of the 2012 contract is adhered to as the government agreed, health care costs will be reduced, patient care will be enhanced and the system will function better. We are asking the Finance Committee to ensure that the Health Ministry honour its promises.

There was another commitment made by the government during the negotiations in 2012. The government and health employers agreed to create a total of 2,150 new nursing positions by 2016. We are not here to ask for more nurses. We want the Health Ministry to honour what has already been agreed to. The goal is to reduce costs. There are many mechanisms and ways to restructure the health care system.

Social determinants of health. The B.C. Nurses Union plays an important role in the protecting of and advocating for health, social and economic well-being of not just

its 40,000 nurses and allied health employees that we represent but the communities in which we live and work. Not only do nurses help promote quality health care, but most are advocates for social justice.

At BCNU we recognize that the health model is rooted in social, economic and environmental conditions. We support initiatives that fight injustice and move our society towards greater equity for all. That includes affordable housing, daycare, a clean environment, regular increases in the minimum wage, and improved income supports and programs for the most vulnerable citizens in our province.

Recognizing that socioeconomic status, social supports and other factors create considerable health disparities, nurses across the province also advocate for equal access to housing, food, income security and health care. We do this in schools, addiction centres, on the street and in mental health clinics — wherever there is a need.

One solution to growing health care costs involves investing in cost-effective services that target the social determinants of health. If the goal is to reduce costs, there are many other mechanisms and ways to restructure the health care system. This means funding services like home and community care with public health insurance. In the long run, these investments will save money and save lives by taking pressure off the more expensive acute care sector.

In closing, here are some ways that BCNU suggests the Finance Committee dedicate resources in order to make the health care system more efficient, effective and sustainable.

Direct the health authorities to fund and adhere to BCNU's 2012 collective agreement.

Ensure that there are enough nurses for safe care, which reduces complications and unnecessary hospital visits. This will reduce costs and enable the system to function better.

Make community health care and preventable services a real priority for government funding. These investments will deliver sustainable savings over the long term.

Target adequate funds for recruitment. Consider incentives, restructuring of the system so that adequate numbers of nurses and doctors will be available in rural settings. As mentioned earlier, dedicate the resources to implement a Nurse First Call system. Increasing the scope of nurses in rural areas will reduce the dependence on doctors or at least enable the ER to remain open 24-7.

Invest in targeting the social determinants of health. Our social health care system is sustainable, but we need to implement much-needed reforms immediately. The commitment to provide safe care to British Columbians was already made by this government in the last contract of BCNU. It now needs to be implemented by the health authorities. Government spending on safe patient care is cost-effective, efficient and the right thing to do.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thank you. We're actually out of time.

Questions?

**E. Foster:** In the very first part of your presentation you talked about news reports about closing down the Kaslo emergency. Is that just out of the newspaper? Have there been official statements?

**J. Renzie:** CBC has....

**E. Foster:** Oh, yeah. CBC is an official.

No, I mean have you actually heard from anybody at IHA that that was going to happen?

**L. Burkart:** Just the steering committee that's been trying to work with the IHA. At this point in time the steering committee has voiced that that's the communication they're getting from the IHA.

Now, when we've directly communicated with the director in charge of this department, she has stated that they have not conclusively made that decision but that they are still looking at restructuring. That's the point where we're at now. That's why we did not say conclusively that they have stated that they are closing it down, but that is still where they're going with it. That is what they're looking at, and that's from the steering committee that's been working to look at other models and things like that.

[0955]

**J. Renzie:** The steering committee had a meeting up in Kaslo. I do this lobby coordinating, but that's just a small part of what I do. That's just sort of like my union involvement. But I work at the Kaslo hospital, and that's where my time is spent, so it's personal.

I have been at that meeting the steering committee called. They have said that they have found it very challenging to work with IHA and that they've not been receiving information from IHA, that their e-mails have not been answered and that it appears to them that this is what's going to be happening.

**E. Foster:** Okay, but there's nothing official that has been said?

**J. Renzie:** No, nothing official has been said by IHA.

**G. Holman:** Thanks very much for your presentation. There's a lot of detail here, a lot of information that I know the committee will look at carefully.

Just a couple of quick questions. Can you describe the Nurse First Call system to me? Also, are there incentives for nurses serving in rural areas? It's fairly common for doctors to receive incentives to serve in rural areas. Are there similar — or analogous, anyway — incentives for

nurses?

**J. Renzie:** No. There is isolation pay. I believe it's \$75 a month. It's prorated, so it's based on hours worked. Some rural areas provide some education. With the cutbacks, there's not been very much....

**G. Holman:** Sorry. So the only incentive you're aware of for nurses serving in rural areas is isolation pay?

**J. Renzie:** Do you mean financial, sir?

**G. Holman:** Yeah, financial.

**J. Renzie:** Financial incentive? Yeah. Isolation pay.

**G. Holman:** Of \$75 a month.

**J. Renzie:** Yeah. Like, when I work, I work 12-hour shifts. I'm the only registered nurse on shift, covering the emergency room. Then, we're unusual in that there's residential care. So I get paid for my break. But I'm not allowed to leave the hospital. I have to be available if an emergency arrives.

**G. Holman:** Okay, thanks. And the First Call system?

**J. Renzie:** I have included in the package.... I just printed up one, and included is the definition of a "nurse practitioner", Nurse First Call and certified rural nurse certificate, as well as a copy of the Ross report.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** We're out of time. Thank you very much for the presentation. Gratefully appreciate it.

**J. Renzie:** Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

I did up.... This is my own. It's not done up by the union, so there are a few typos, and I apologize.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** We prefer personal. Thank you.

Have a good day, folks. Thank you for coming in.

Next up is Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy.

Good morning. Thank you. So ten minutes for your presentation. I'll give a two-minute warning. We have five minutes for questions. We have heard from you and your groups all the way through, so this is great. It's a positive reinforcement. Please start. I'll leave it with you.

**D. Profili:** Thank you so much.

My name is Desneiges Profili. I'm the regional program manager for the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, also known as CBAL. With me today I have Alana Murdoch. She is a literacy outreach coordinator in Castlegar.

CBAL operates in 16 centres serving 77 communities across the Columbia Basin and Boundary region. We

are a non-profit literacy organization whose goal is to develop, promote and deliver literacy services to help citizens of all ages improve their literacy skills and engage in lifelong learning. We do employ 16 literacy outreach coordinators who are direct beneficiaries of literacy funding that is provided by the Ministry of Education to Decoda Literacy Solutions.

First and foremost, before we begin any further, I just want to thank you for providing us with an opportunity to represent the literacy field during the public consultation process and right in our communities, which is a big bonus for us, for sure.

Today I'll briefly touch on the necessity of the literacy funding, and I'm going to share with you a powerful story that will demonstrate how this funding directly impacted the life of one mother and her family in the community of Castlegar.

The literacy field has been evolving for many years. Today we know that literacy is about helping people attain the skills and knowledge needed to fully participate in society — socially, economically, politically and culturally.

[1000]

In B.C. literacy funding that is provided to the 102 task groups through Decoda allows organizations like CBAL to coordinate and deliver literacy and learning programs. These are unique programs in the sense that they support people who are not traditionally served by other systems. We're not talking about people that are in a K-to-12 system — not all the time — post-secondary institutions or other employment training programs.

You might ask yourself: "What's left beyond those?" For us, learning is a continuum. It doesn't start the moment a child enters school. It starts the moment a child is born. Learning doesn't end the moment someone leaves an institution with a piece of paper in their hand. It happens through the continuum of their life.

At CBAL we say that learning is lifelong and life-wide. That's why we provide services to adults and families of all ages to help them improve their reading, writing, parenting, workplace and language skills.

The literacy funding that the province has made a commitment to provide — which we thank the province for — has gone directly to support literacy coordination, and it supports the work of the literacy outreach coordinators in each of the communities. It provides them with the resources to advocate for literacy, to bring key stakeholders together to talk about the literacy needs of the communities and to leverage additional funding to make programs a reality.

We know that \$2.5 million is a significant amount of money. We understand that. But we do believe that that is the amount of money needed to support the work of the literacy field in our province.

The funding not only supports the literacy outreach coordinators; it also goes to support Decoda Literacy

Solutions in their work to provide an overall provincial support. That support offers professional development, ongoing training, mentorship and support to the communities. We know that without that support from Decoda, probably our success in our communities wouldn't be the way that it is today. The work that they do is immeasurable for us. It provides us with a great deal of support.

I think that in the field of literacy, we've made tremendous strides in coming from a different place. The way that we're able to mobilize, able to offer programs, share resources with one another, provides literacy practitioners with opportunities that just weren't there before.

We did promise you a story, and I am going to tell you the story about how this funding has made a direct impact on the life of a young mother and her family. But I just want to give you some background. In many communities across B.C. and the country, there are countless parents who are in the position of perhaps not having the skills or training needed to be able to attain their desired employment. We see this all the time.

I was a young mother myself who went back to school after kids. You want to go to school, but there are things stopping you from walking through the door. Often it's child care; it's the resources; it's time; it's fear, anxiety and all those other things that come with it.

At one of our planning sessions in 2010.... We do a district literacy plan every year that's submitted to the Ministry of Education, and the large planning session happens in the spring. It came to our.... It didn't come to us then, but we knew that there was a trend in the community — that there were parents that wanted to attend programs but just didn't have the ability to attend at that time.

So we were trying to think: "What could we do as organizations? What could we do together?" We knew we needed child care. We knew that we needed a place to offer an ABE program that had a classroom for ABE and also a site to do on-site childminding for the parents. And we wanted it to be free for them to attend.

We knew we needed someone to coordinate, and we knew that we probably needed some funding to pay for that program. We were really fortunate, because we have some very strong partners in our communities. One of them is Selkirk College. As for them, they came forward and said: "We can provide an instructor to provide off-site ABE classes."

We were, like: "That's great." Then we had Kootenay Family Place. If you know Castlegar, Kootenay Family Place is the place for families. People love Kootenay Family Place. It's welcoming. It's warm. They said: "We've got a class that you can use as an ABE classroom, and we've got a space you can use for childminding."

Then CBAL came forward and said: "Well, we could help with the coordination of the program. We could help provide some direct costs for the direct delivery of

the program. Hopefully, we could see if we could leverage some other funding."

In four months that program came to fruition, in the fall. It was called at the time ABE Upgrading. Nobody really liked the name. It's now called Back to School with Baby. It's in its fourth year running in Castlegar right now, it's in its third year in Trail, and it's in its first year running in the Boundary. And it's all partnerships with Selkirk College and local family organizations.

The story we're going to tell you is about one person who did attend that program. She would have really liked to have been here. She is a wonderful example of how this funding impacts an individual. She feels it is so important for her to share her story about it. She's not ashamed that she had to go back and upgrade. She's carved her own path for herself and her family.

Alana is going to actually read it. She did send it to us, and she couldn't be here, so I'm going to let Alana read it.  
[1005]

**A. Murdoch:** Good morning. Here is what Charity had to say about her experience:

"I would like to express my gratitude for the CBAL programs at Kootenay Family Place. I have two children and needed to upgrade my work skills in order to re-enter the workforce. My three-year-old son has been diagnosed with febrile seizures, and I was very hesitant to jump back into my re-education.

"Someone told me that there is a program where they have an instructor for the parents in one room and provide child care in the other. This was perfect for me. I completed my upgrades. I continued on to the administrative skills classes at Selkirk College and completed my practicum at Kootenay Family Place, and I am now utilizing my skills in a full-time job.

"I have met so many wonderful people who are really dedicated to helping. Thank you for the support, the guidance and, most importantly, for helping me to gain the confidence that I needed in order to be successful."

**D. Profili:** Thanks, Alana.

The story of Charity and her success is touching, and it is meaningful because it actually shows the tangible results of a community that has taken literacy to a whole new level through partnership and collaboration. This funding allows us to do meaningful work that makes a difference and helps individuals to partake fully in society. By making an investment in the communities, you are investing in the betterment of our society.

As I leave here today, I just want to say that the literacy field has come a long way and that it is due to the commitment that the province has made to the communities. As you move forward and begin planning for the next year, I hope you remember the story of Charity as you go on, because that is just one example of the life that has been impacted thanks to your investment. This funding makes a difference in our communities. It helps people's lives, it improves their quality of life, and it builds stronger, more resilient communities. Thank you once again.

That concludes our presentation.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thanks, Alana and Desneiges. Any questions or comments? Well, thank you very much for the presentation.

**D. Profili:** Thank you for having us.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thank you again for coming — once again, positive reinforcement. We've heard.... Actually, we started in Chilliwack with Decoda.

**D. Profili:** Great. And I think you had Betty yesterday.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Yes, we had a nice lady over in Cranbrook.

**D. Profili:** Excellent.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thanks. Have a good day. Selkirk College — Gary and Neil. Oh, three. Who did I miss?

**M. Dion:** It's Mike. I'll just be sitting in.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Mike. Okay. You're the backup support, are you?

**M. Dion:** Yes.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Well, thanks, gentlemen, for coming. Ten minutes for the presentation and questions. I will give you a two-minute warning. Once again, thank you for coming.

**G. Leier:** In case you're scratching your head — "Where do I know this guy from?" — in a previous life I was director of HR with the Central Okanagan regional district. Part of my responsibilities was the 911 program.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** I do. I was looking at the name. Pleased to see you again.

**G. Leier:** Nice to see you again.

The second comment: we didn't collude with the last presenter.

Thank you for offering Selkirk College this opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services. We appreciate the effort government is making to garner public support prior to determining the 2014-15 budget during what continue to be fiscally challenging times.

Selkirk College serves the Kootenay-Boundary region of British Columbia with campuses in Castlegar, Grand Forks and Nelson, with learning centres in Kaslo and Nakusp. Selkirk offers a comprehensive array of 70 programs — trades, vocational, career, university transfer, select bachelor's — with particular expertise in geomat-

ics; nursing and health care; visual, digital and performing arts; natural resource management; tourism; business; apprentices; trades. Let me skip to the chase. We do a wide array of training.

In support of public policy, we strongly support accessibility in two distinct ways: by offering academic upgrading at six different locations and by admitting any student, whatever their current educational level, and helping them obtain desired knowledge and skills to reach their educational and life goals. We are currently working with a number of partners, as you've just heard, to provide improved access and appropriate educational pathways, as was outlined to you, to groups such as aboriginal learners.

Selkirk College is committed to effective use of public resources, once again, in support of public policy — programs and services that are relevant to students and communities. For example, our partnership with the Columbia Basin Trust and the operation of the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute continues to exemplify this commitment.

[1010]

The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute gathers and disseminates up-to-date, regional-specific information and research which supports informed decision-making by the communities and businesses across the Columbia Basin and Boundary regions. In support of decisions for the well-being of communities, the institute is providing real-world, rural economic development work placement for students in the region.

In addition, Selkirk College has several other initiatives that collaborate with community partners — among them, the Aboriginal Gathering Place, Selkirk Geospatial Research Centre, the Mir Centre for Peace, the Teaching and Learning Institute. Although our primary focus has always been providing relevant, engaging educational opportunities for students, initiatives such as these also provide direct, tangible benefits to communities beyond our primary purpose.

**N. Coburn:** I'd like to follow up with just a few comments. I leave you to read the submission we made. I'm sure you're looking for more reading to do. I'd just like to give you a few highlights.

In terms of supporting the B.C. jobs plan and the skills and training plan, Selkirk was a co-facilitator with College of the Rockies for the Kootenay regional workforce table. That report was released in August, and it's referenced here in the submission.

It identified a number of areas, and areas for further research-and-development work. Just for the steering committee to know, Selkirk is following-up again with our partners, the College of the Rockies, to develop an industry-based steering committee to help us develop specific training initiatives to meet the employment needs of the region. That's ongoing work that we

intend to continue, with some of our industry and college partners.

For example, just yesterday we had a meeting with College of the Rockies colleagues. In the 16 high-profile needs in the workforce table, there were six job categories that had either the word "manager" or "supervisor" in the job description.

With our Rockies partners, we're looking to put on a manager/supervisor leadership program, probably a 12-day program, that has some core elements, but it can be tailored to meet the mining industry or an industrial sector or the resource sector as needed. We're looking to offer that in the region for those companies that are looking for expertise in those areas.

Looking to ensure a skilled and educated workforce in B.C., one of the things.... Our primary objective, of course, is always to serve learners, and to do that with some quality instruction. I just wanted to point out the latest student outcomes survey that the government conducts every year with graduates nine months after they leave a program.

In the development area, the quality of instruction was rated by students to be good or very good at Selkirk at 92 percent, compared to 87 percent for the provincial average. For our career diploma and associate degree students, it was 85 percent, compared to 79 percent for the provincial average.

For the trades apprenticeship students, it was 92 percent, compared to 85 percent for the provincial average. In an example of that, last April we had our first graduating class from a level 4 apprenticeship program. They had a 100 percent success rate on the interprovincial qualifying exam.

So that's just examples of ways that we're trying to provide quality education and training to meet the needs of our learners and regions.

Selkirk supports vibrant communities. You heard about the partnership we have with CBAL, and how it's helping some people — in that case, young mothers with children who are trying to upgrade their skills.

The government had a more direct role to play in that story, which Desneiges didn't allude to. The CBAL partnership we had gave this young mother the foundational work she needed in order to enter a program. The program that she actually entered, administrative skills training, was one of the employment skills access programs that the government provided funding for, and that person is now in full-time employment.

That's another thank-you to the government for ways that you're helping us to provide those conduits for people.

Gary also mentioned a number of other initiatives we have around building good partnerships — so the Teaching and Learning Institute, the Aboriginal Gathering Place. There are examples in the report of things they're doing.

I wanted to touch on the Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute for a minute. This is an eight-year partnership between us and the Columbia Basin Trust, and its goal is to strengthen communities within the Basin-Boundary region. Because CBT is involved, it's not just the Selkirk region that this serves; it's the whole basin, which includes the East Kootenay, as well, and the West Kootenay and the Boundary.

[1015]

One example of work that's going on there. There is a whole raft of activities going on within that area. Dr. Terri MacDonald, who leads it, is just a powerhouse. You come out of a meeting with her with your hair blowing back. She tells you what's going on.

One of the things they're working on is.... In rural communities it's difficult to maintain and attract small businesses. There was a very successful project in Ontario called Business Retention and Expansion, which looked at how smaller communities could retain the businesses they have and attract new businesses.

Based on that successful model, the RDI — the Rural Development Institute — is supporting that process in the basin and Boundary. I believe there are 15 communities currently involved in the survey work now. The idea is to help the communities find ways to support businesses in their region and make them more vibrant, sustainable and ongoing.

Regarding our government partnerships, we really appreciate the investment in operating capital made last year. It's made a huge difference on our trades facilities, and our trades instructors were walking on cloud nine when they saw this new equipment coming in. We got roughly \$800,000 for new operating capital from the government.

The post-secondary landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. There are now 11 universities. When Selkirk started, there was UBC, SFU was one year old, and UVic was two years old. We now have two universities that are within an easy drive of the Selkirk region. That's changed the landscape for us significantly.

So we're assessing and changing our program mix to reflect this new reality, to meet regional needs, to line up with the B.C. jobs plan, to adapt to a shrinking high school demographic and, at the same time, deal with some traditional programs that we have that are high-FTE-cost programs and, at the same time, try and improve our efficiencies and our shared services.

We understand the government's fiscal realities, but we have been in an extended period of zero or decreased operating grants. This makes it difficult to operate across a wide geographic area with diverse communities, diverse stakeholders and to adapt to a 21st-century learning environment when our facilities are mostly 50 years old.

As you'll see in the report, we have an \$18.5 million maintenance deficit on our facilities. We would ask you to consider appropriately proportional, stable and pre-

dictable funding that will allow the college to better align with the jobs plan, the B.C. skills and training plan and meet the needs of rural learners in communities.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Gentlemen, thank you very much. Any questions?

**M. Hunt:** I always find submissions from academics most interesting. A two-day indigenization workshop: for two days we're working at trying to figure out how to take things from outside our region and localize them into how we can make them work?

**N. Coburn:** Actually, the whole point of the indigenization workshop is to help reflect an environment that's more conducive and welcoming to aboriginal students. That workshop was based on work done at Camosun College by somebody who's been working in the area for 20 years. So if you're wondering about the two days, you're right. The two days isn't enough to do it. Two days is just a start. This is going to be a multi-year process for changing the culture within our institution so that aboriginal students feel more welcome and engaged.

**M. Hunt:** Yeah, because we use the.... In local government, indigenization is when we're taking somebody else's idea and figuring out how to make it work locally in our community and make it work for us, you know. Excellent. Thank you, sir.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Any other comments?

Gentlemen, thank you very much. Gary, it's nice to see you again. I do apologize. I was going: "I know the name...."

**G. Leier:** I could tell.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Just before we carry on I'd like to introduce Michelle Mungall, the MLA for Nelson-Creston. Welcome, nice to see you.

Next up we have the Kootenay Columbia Teachers Union.

Andy, welcome. Ten minutes for the presentation. I'll give you a two-minute warning. The floor is yours, sir.

**A. Davidoff:** Thank you to the committee for having us. Our presentation is not scripted, and it's not a speech, but it's hopefully a lesson — a ten-minute lesson, and there's an awful lot to say. There's a point to this lesson, and if you're patient, I think you'll get the point.

[1020]

I'd like to start the presentation with an excerpt from Robert Fulghum. This is *All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*.

"All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten about how to live, what to do and how to be. Wisdom was not at the top of the

graduate school mountain, but there in the sand pile of the school.

"These are the things I learned. Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life — learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some. Take a nap every afternoon.

"When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic; hold hands and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: the roots go down and the plant goes up, and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup — they all die. So do we.

"And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned — the biggest word of all — 'look.' Everything you know is in there somewhere: the golden rule, love, basic sanitation, ecology and politics and equality and sane living.

"Take any of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work" — or this committee's work — "or your government or your world, and it holds true and clear and firm.

"Think what a better world it would be if all — the whole world — had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap, or if all governments have a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

"And it is still true, no matter how old we are, when we go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together."

Now, the Kootenay Columbia Teachers Union members have a dream. We took our lesson from the Fulghum piece. I will read this dream to you. It's in the form of a poem. It's written in the noble spirit of and with full credit to the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

*We Have a Dream*

We have a dream that one day public education, health care and social services in British Columbia will receive adequate funding.

We have a dream that one day every student in our beautiful province will receive all the support that he or she needs.

We have a dream that one day a progressive and caring government will, in the pure light of justice, reinstate unconstitutionally stripped collective agreement language.

We have a dream that one day all of our children will live in a province that is free from hunger, that is free from poverty, that is free from discrimination of any kind.

We can only hope and pray that one day, throughout our great province, we can all say: "Let freedom and justice ring. Let freedom and justice ring. Let freedom and justice ring."

So a lofty dream.

To go back to the Fulghum lesson, what is relevant to us in that lesson?

Sharing. We advocate for sharing instead of constant and unexpected downloading on school boards mid-budget, which is just a form of hidden taxation, and as a consequence, creates losing school districts by virtue of the changes in education funding formulas and has boards of education scrambling to meet instantly bloated deficits.

We also appear to be placing families first but can't find any money for children in our budgets in B.C, so we continue to remain at the top of the child poverty list in Canada for over a decade.

[1025]

"Play fair." Our Premier received a 54 percent front-end-loaded salary increase in 2007, and then we saw the invocation of a net zero fiscal policy mandated for everyone else. And \$300 million plus a year was taken from the public education budget for over a decade. The B.C. Supreme Court confirmed this.

"Don't hit people." We, the teachers unions and other public service sector unions, perceive that we are constantly being hit by concepts such as net zero and cooperative gains — which, in essence, is another form of downloading and hidden taxation.

"Put things back where you found them" — our stripped collective agreement language.

"Clean up your own mess" — instead of having the courts do it for you.

"Don't take things that aren't yours." Collective agreement language belongs to the parties, to the collective agreement, and the education system belongs to all of us.

"Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody" — instead of being forced to do so by the courts.

We've done our homework. We've actually reviewed every submission that's been made before this committee, and we don't want to repeat things that have been stated earlier. But the old Mother Hubbard nursery rhyme comes to mind because, obviously, the cupboard appears to be bare. So why is the cupboard bare — or appears to be bare?

The terms of reference for this committee are to "conduct public consultations...regarding the provincial budget and fiscal policy...by any means the committee considers appropriate, including but not limited to public meetings" — such as this — "telephone and electronic means." The committee is also "to consider and make recommendations on the annual reports and the rolling three-year service plans and budgets of the...statutory officers."

We respectfully submit that the reason that the cupboard is bare and for the problems we have — and there's been request after request in all the submissions that came before ours — is that the fiscal policy in British Columbia appears to be the following: that there's an opposition to any and all efforts to increase the marginal income tax rates for individuals and/or businesses and that there appears to be opposition for any net reduction or elimination of deductions and credits unless matched dollar for dollar by further reducing tax rates.

Where did I get this from? From the Americans for Tax Reform. This is the pledge that every Republican candidate signs in America if they want to get elected.

Now, we don't like taxes, and we've been spoiled. Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. said it best. Taxes are the price we pay for civilization. More specifically, taxes are the price we pay for the province and country we love. Taxes put out fires, keep our streets safe, provide our children with education, provide our families with health care, ensure



that our food and water are safe, create legal safeguards for businesses and employees — in other words, provide us benefits every hour of the day, every day of the year.

If we ignore, shortchange or postpone funding for social, economic and environmental problems today, the solutions become more expensive in the future. Taxes make the marketplace work by maintaining a regulated business environment to protect property rights, enforce fair practices and protect consumers and investors. Taxes allow citizens, residents and businesses to do things together that we could never do on our own. In other words, taxes allow us to be British Columbians in the way we live, work and play. A lot of this came from Canadians for Tax Fairness.

I wear another hat. I'm also on a hospital board. I'm a regional district director. I know that in our communities we ask and consult with our constituents. Do we want a fire service? Do we want animal control? Do we want street lighting? There are 180 services that the regional district of Central Kootenay offers. Each one of those is taxed with consultation with our constituents.

We humbly and respectfully submit to this committee that the fiscal policy in British Columbia has to be reviewed and that there be consultation with every citizen in this province to determine priorities, to determine what people are prepared to pay additional taxes for. Education, social services and health are three very, very important areas for us.

That's our submission.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Okay, thank you, sir.

Questions, comments?

Sir, I appreciate it. Thank you. Have a good day.

Next up we have B.C. Touring Council.

We have ten minutes. I'll give you a two-minute warning, and then there'll be questions, if so, by the committee. So welcome, Joanna.

[1030]

**J. Maratta:** Thank you. It won't take that long. I'm going to be brief.

My name is Joanna Maratta, and I'm the executive director of the British Columbia Touring Council. I really wanted to come today — I drove in from Nelson; we run the Touring Council from a region rather than the big city of Vancouver — to thank the government for the increase in funding to the B.C. Arts Council and the investment to the arts.

I'd also like to make note of thanks for the creation of Creative B.C. for the cultural industries. It's good news these days for arts and culture. We're very, very happy.

The B.C. Touring Council exists for successful and sustainable presenting and touring of the live performing arts in British Columbia. We've been around for 38 years. Our members include performing arts venues and volunteer concert societies and arts councils from

Fort Nelson to Sidney, from high points on Vancouver Island to Invermere — all through the province, about 70 presenting organizations and the thousands of artists that tour throughout British Columbia and across Canada every year.

In 2012-2013 there were over 450 live touring shows throughout British Columbia. Artists were paid about \$1.5 million in fees and generated revenues for organizations of about \$5 million, and \$2.26 million of that was generated in ticket sales. It's a very, very important part of community life, and success and sustainability is very much connected to the level of support that we receive through the provincial government.

One of the things in the last year the British Columbia government came out with was the B.C. Creative Futures program, and in that, there are very specific initiatives for arts and culture. We believe that in order to be able to successfully implement this program, continued investment in the arts is necessary.

So I'm here to ask this committee to consider the following: that in addition to the current funding level of \$24 million for the '13-14 year you consider the increase to \$32 million for the '14-15 budget, with a plan to increase the legislated appropriation investment to \$40 million by 2016.

While the B.C. Arts Council is doing its best with the increased funding to \$24 million this year... And I will say that they've been extremely fantastic at getting it out the door to increase the funding to their core clients, through operating assistance as well as new projects.

But in order for them to adequately fulfil their mandate or address current demands on the programs, the increase to \$32 million will begin to address the existing shortfalls while being able to look towards the implementation of the creative industries strategy. And the longer-term increase to \$40 million will help British Columbia to become more complete within the national context.

The other area is community gaming grants, which provide essential funding for arts organizations around the province. When the gaming funds were cut to the arts sector a few years ago, it really created turmoil. Many organizations had to close their doors. Slowly, with the changes, their doors have been reopening. There's been support to allow... Many volunteer organizations and arts councils that run strictly as volunteers do need the assistance of some staff, and gaming funds allow for that.

We would like to support and propose the increasing for gaming to organizations from \$135.5 million in '12-13 to \$156 million for '14-15 with the option to further increase gaming grants in the longer term.

[1035]

The most important thing is to provide stable and predictable funding to the arts through the B.C. Arts Council and through community gaming so that they can offer multi-year funding to arts and culture organizations.

We recommend specifically considering a three-year

budgeting model that includes the ability to carry out unspent earmarked funds, so that does not penalize successful fundraising.

That's all I have to say.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thank you very much. Your peer discussed this with us yesterday in Cranbrook, so we're hearing this. I want to thank you again.

**J. Maratta:** A different organization, but that was our sister organization — ArtsBC.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Okay. But the numbers are the same, so somebody is talking to each other on the phone.

**J. Maratta:** Well, we most definitely are talking to each other because we do exist as a provincial service organization as well.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Okay. Thank you for the presentation.

**L. Popham:** Thanks for presenting. I appreciate what you're saying completely. My sister-in-law made her whole entire living doing touring in the children's theatre venue in Ontario. I think your points were very clear and well made.

**G. Holman:** A quick question about the gaming grants — to \$156 million. I'm recollecting that that was the level at which gaming grants were....

**J. Maratta:** It was, in a previous time.

**G. Holman:** Several years ago or...?

**J. Maratta:** I think it was the '09-10 season, so before the turmoil with the economy.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Any other comments or questions? Thank you very much for your presentation. Have a good day.

I'll take a recess until the next presenter is here.

The committee recessed from 10:36 a.m. to 10:43 a.m.

[D. Ashton in the chair.]

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Good morning. Thank you very much for coming. What we have is a ten-minute format for the presentation. I'll give you a two-minute warning. We have up to five minutes for the questions.

Welcome, and thank you for coming for the presentation today.

**A. Brynne:** Good morning, everyone. Thank you

very much, very sincerely, for the work that you do and for allowing me to present today. I fully appreciate what a mammoth task you have in producing a budget that serves the best interests of all British Columbians.

My name is Abra Brynne, and I'm a program manager with Food Secure Canada, where I focus on food systems and policy. I'm also a founding member and director of the B.C. Food Systems Network. Both organizations serve civil society — work with farm organizations, indigenous people, health professionals, academics, fishers and others to promote vibrant, just and ecological food systems and livelihoods.

I realize that your primary task is consultations on the budget. However, recently your mandate was expanded to include the core programs review, which I shall be addressing today.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** I just want to correct you on that. There was a comment made on that. We are prepared to take input on that, but there is still some discussion that's taking place on how that will be presented as the core service starts rolling ahead. But please, you're more than welcome to use it.

**A. Brynne:** Thank you for that clarification.

I was a child on a farm in the Okanagan Valley when the ALR was brought in and observed my father's struggle to adjust to a new set of constraints being applied to land that our family owned. As an 11-year-old, I did not have the context to understand what this change meant, but 40 years later I certainly appreciate what an incredible, visionary and bold decision was taken in 1972. Jurisdictions across Canada and around the world view our agricultural land reserve with envy and admiration, and they are right to do so.

[1045]

Forty years ago the reserve was put in place to stop the loss of agricultural land that was happening at an alarming rate of 6,000 hectares per year. Fast-forward to the present, and it is all the more apparent just how vital and precious that land is in the face of increasing population pressures and climate conditions.

Only 5 percent of B.C.'s land base is suitable for agriculture. The B.C. Food Systems Network has long stated that any jurisdiction that cannot feed itself is at the mercy of whoever can. Anyone following the news these days can't help but be aware of all the political unrest and extreme weather events that are threatening what we have all gotten used to in the lifetime of the ALR: long supply chains.

A 2006 study by the Ministry of Agriculture assessed B.C.'s food self-sufficiency. The report found that B.C. farmers produce 48 percent of the food that B.C. citizens consume. Tied closely to the concept of self-sufficiency is food security. British Columbia's communal food security, the ability to meet our core dietary needs, is inher-

ently tied to our land and water.

As the Auditor General stated in his 2010 report on the audit of the Agricultural Land Commission:

"Agricultural land is an indispensable, natural resource. Once taken over for urban development, farmland is no longer available for food production. Protected farmland fosters local economic stability and provides environmental services and public benefits. One of the main reasons for any jurisdiction to preserve farmland, however, is to secure food production into the future, especially in light of the impending effects of climate change."

Those are the words of the Auditor General.

Over the 40-year history of the ALR we are lucky that it has not died the death of a thousand cuts or, in this case, of a thousand exclusions. I took a look at the volume of applications that have come before the commission since 2006, and there are approximately 400 each year.

These ad hoc applications constantly challenge the provincewide mandate and vision of the reserve and of the commission tasked with preserving it. They also take away staff from the proactive planning and support of both agricultural land and farming.

The uncertain environment that is created by this endless parade of applications also challenges the livelihoods of farmers in an already challenging sector. This was recently and eloquently expressed by Allen Reid of Hazeldell Orchards in Kelowna in response to an application to exclude a large piece of prime agricultural land right next to his farm.

"As human beings, we seem to be inordinately challenged to see beyond our own perspectives and priorities. The role of the commission is to see beyond the individual ad hoc applications of landowners to the larger good of the citizens of this province, knowing that our present and future vibrancy is tied to our ability to feed ourselves, as has been the case for all human communities since time began. Once agricultural land is lost, it can almost never be reclaimed. One has only to look at vast swaths of the Fraser and Okanagan valleys to see the truth in that."

Not only is our agricultural land essential and best protected by a fully functional agricultural land reserve; so is the Agricultural Land Commission.

As the Auditor General stated in his 2010 report, the Agricultural Land Commission was created because the "loss of agricultural land to development, coupled with evidence that local governments were unable or unwilling to halt development pressure, led to a political urgency to save farmland."

The commission holds the broader and long-term vision for our scarce farmland that will benefit our children and our grandchildren through agricultural production within our own borders and control.

Public funds have already been used in recent years to review both the agricultural land reserve and the commission. In 2010 then Agriculture Minister Steve Thomson directed newly appointed chair Richard Bullock to provide a comprehensive report to him. I was privileged to participate in one of those consultations that the commission held in communities across the province.

Richard Bullock's report holds some key messages and great suggestions for safeguarding the ALR and for

making the commission a more effective and efficient organization better able to fulfil its mandate. The Auditor General, whom I quoted earlier, reinforced those recommendations the same year.

Directing energy and resources of the core review to an additional review of the ALR and commission is not a good use of our tax dollars. We have been there, done that, and now it just remains to allow the commission to carry on with the work of implementing the recommendations in those reports with proper funding to do the work so essential for the future of British Columbians.

I want to wrap up with a story that helps to illustrate the importance to our economy and our future food security of thriving farms with reliable access to land.

[1050]

My friends the Harris family were unable to attend your hearings. The two generations of the Harris family — Wayne, Denise, Nadine and Erin — are very busy running their dairy farm. They farm 700 acres in Lister. For those of you who are not familiar with Lister, it is a fertile bench above the floor of the Creston Valley. They milk 80 cows and produce all the food for their cattle from those 700 acres.

About eight years ago they started producing award-winning, European-style cheese that can be found in markets right across Canada. More recently they decided to add a milk-bottling line to their operation, and as of April this year they have been selling bottled milk throughout the Kootenays.

The success of this new product line is beyond their highest expectations, and they have not seen a milk tanker truck on their farm for several months, as they have been able to use all the milk they produce in their cheese and bottled milk. They have yet to meet the demand and will be expanding their milking herd by 20 percent as soon as they are able to get the cows.

The dairy products manager at a large grocer in Nelson that carries their milk has enthusiastically reported that the introduction of the Harris milk has not reduced sales of other milk. It has only increased their overall dairy sales. The demand for the Harris cheese also continues to grow exponentially, and the family is now striving to determine what level of production will enable them to continue to have a thriving business while also ensuring a reasonable workload.

The key message that Nadine wanted me to convey to you is that without land and that particular land base in Lister, none of this would be possible. They only own 100 of the acres that they farm. They manage a total of 28 parcels in order to produce the food they need for their herd. However, they know that the protein levels in the crops in Lister are far superior to even the crops from the nearby Creston Valley bottom. Nor would their business model be viable if they were required to purchase off-farm feed.

Twenty-eight parcels is no mean feat to manage, but it would be worse if the combination of the ALR and the lo-

cal land use planning had not ensured that the minimum lot size in Lister is 50 acres.

The Harris farm is one of those great Canadian farm business success stories that we all need to hear: two generations working on the farm, with a clear succession plan, a thriving business with millions of dollars invested in on-farm infrastructure, high demand for their products in the community and across the country, and good jobs for area residents.

None of this would be possible without the land — the quality, the access and the recognition that the highest and best use of agricultural land is indeed agriculture. We need the ALR and a well-funded and professional commission to safeguard this for current and future citizens of this wonderful province.

Thank you for your time, for the opportunity to present today and for your work.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thanks, Abra. I appreciate that.

**M. Hunt:** Just a question. Are you aware of the fact that...? Your introduction and your beginning were dealing with all these applications to the ALR. Are you aware that the ALR today is in fact larger than the ALR was in 1974 when it was first introduced, that we've added about 38,000 hectares to it in recent years? The tone of where you're going is like, you know, the developers are taking it all and it's all disappearing, and in fact, the reverse is true.

**A. Brynne:** Well, I think the important thing is to look at where that land is and the quality of the land. As you likely also know, much of the land that has been excluded from the ALR since it was brought in place has been in the south, and a lot of the land that's been brought in has been in the north. There's also a lot of evidence that peri-urban agriculture is an important component of both food security for the municipalities as well as economic viability for farms because of the ready access to the markets.

I know that in the far north where a lot of that agricultural land that was included, it is very... They couldn't come up with a business model for a mobile poultry abattoir along the highway between Prince George and points further east. Even though there was poultry, they couldn't cobble together enough poultry and access the adequate market to have the volumes to make a mobile abattoir viable. It's about placement. It's about where the land is.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Okay. I have a whole bunch of questions. I'm sorry. You're going to have to keep them sharp. Okay? I have three minutes left.

[1055]

**G. Holman:** Thanks very much for your presentation today. I assume you're providing us with a written version of your statement.

I also had a question about your statement about exclusion applications — 400 per year — which I found a bit startling, Marvin's comments notwithstanding. Does that include non-farm use exemptions, or is that just exclusion applications?

**A. Brynne:** It's the whole realm of applications. If any of you had the opportunity to read Richard Bullock's report, he's trying to prioritize the sorts of applications that the commission actually reviews in order to streamline the process and, essentially, not deal with sort of less critical applications.

**E. Foster:** A couple of things. One, you commented on the land that's been included or added to being of a lower-quality agricultural land. One of the things that we've heard many, many times from property owners, developers and everyone is that they would like to see agricultural land defined and protected and the non-agricultural-quality land be used for other uses. We hear that a lot.

For the most part, reasonable people — excluding non-reasonable people — the people that I've talked to want to protect agricultural land. You know, I don't want to buy my food from Chile. I want to make sure that we've got good agricultural land.

The other thing, about applications. I've read Richard's report cover to cover several times. They talk about.... One of the things they want to do to cut down their workload is.... You can't make an application every second year to have the same piece of land excluded, which makes sense. If you've been turned down for a good reason, you've been turned down. There's an appeal process.

I question to say that if you have agricultural land, that's it and that's the end of the conversation. I think it's pretty heavy-handed. I think we need to make sure that.... This is a free country, and you should be able to make an application — again, not as a nuisance, because there are a lot of those.

You know, it's good agricultural land. It's going to stay, especially if you bought the land three years ago and it was in the land reserve and it's quality land. Then that's what it is. That's what you bought. But I think we need to be a little bit more open about how we address these things.

**A. Brynne:** May I respond?

**D. Ashton (Chair):** You've got about ten seconds.

**A. Brynne:** I know the commission would love to do a pan-provincial boundary review because of the regular comments made, "Oh, it's rocky; it's on a mountain-side," etc. They need the funds to digitize the maps and do a comprehensive boundary review, and then I think we can assess what we need currently, communally, as

well as in the future for agricultural land and the ability to feed ourselves.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Lana, you're the windup.

**L. Popham:** Thanks for your presentation. You're always such a strong and articulate voice for agriculture. I really appreciate that.

I think it's a fact that we've seen a decrease in our class 1 and 2 lands in this province over the life of the agricultural land reserve — notwithstanding that I think all classes of agricultural land are important.

The points that you brought up about Richard Bullock's report. I think he made a very sound report. The financing of the Agricultural Land Commission was included within that report. In fact, the application fee structure.... We have legislation right now that could help us fund that if it was implemented.

I appreciate you bringing up those points, and I look forward to your input over the next little while.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Abra, thank you for your presentation. Just as a point of closure, there has been \$4 million added in the 2013 budget, over the next three years, going to the Agricultural Land Commission.

**A. Brynne:** That's great.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Have a great day.

**A. Brynne:** You're welcome. Safe travels.

**D. Ashton (Chair):** Thank you.  
At this point in time, I would like to adjourn.

The committee adjourned at 10:59 a.m.



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