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THE HONOURABLE STEVE THOMSON, SPEAKER

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PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
Her Honour the Honourable Judith Guichon, OBC

FIRST SESSION, 41ST PARLIAMENT

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THURSDAY, JUNE 29, 2017

The House met at 1:34 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Routine Business

Introductions by Members

Mr. Speaker: Members, there are many, many guests here this afternoon, so I'm going to, on behalf of all members of the House and all members of the assembly, welcome everybody here this afternoon.

I'm going to allow introductions by members for former members of this House to be recognized but would offer the welcome to everybody else on behalf of the total assembly and all members gathered here today.

[1335]

J. Darcy: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the former MLA for New Westminster, now a city councillor with the city of New Westminster — Chuck Puchmayr.

S. Robinson: It is my pleasure to welcome our favourite Newfoundlander, who represented Coquitlam-Maillardville for two terms. Diane Thorne is here joining us, along with her husband, Neil Edmondson.

M. Elmore: I am very pleased to welcome and introduce the former MLA for Vancouver-Kensington. The much-beloved David Chudnovsky is here, also joined by, you can argue, his better half, Ruth Herman, who is joining us here. I ask everybody to please make them very welcome.

Hon. A. Wilkinson: In the gallery today, we're joined by two important individuals from my riding, a long-time resident and historian, Dr. Robert Gallagher, and his sister Patti Gallagher. For personal reasons, which will remain known to them, this is a very special day for them. I ask the gallery to give them an especially warm welcome.

M. Dean: I am honoured to introduce two leaders from my community, both former members of this chamber. Joining us today is Moe Sihota, the member for Esquimalt-Port Renfrew and Esquimalt-Metchosin from 1986 to 2001; and Maurine Karagianis, the member from 2005 until her retirement earlier this year. They have both been amazing champions for our community. I hope members will join with me in thanking them for their years of service and for being with us here today.

H. Bains: It is my pleasure to introduce to you the former member and mentor to many of us in this House,

Sue Hammell, who was an MLA and a minister in the 1990s and was re-elected again in 2005 until the last election. Please help me welcome Sue Hammell.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

NAKUSP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

K. Conroy: Last week I had the honour of being part of the opening ceremonies of Aboriginal Days at the Nakusp Elementary School. The gym was filled to capacity with students and teachers from throughout school district 10. Ganishka Silverfox-Dann, a Cree and Ojibway elder, gave a greeting and talked about the day. It was obvious by the respect shown to her by the students that she is well known and loved throughout the schools.

Outside the school there were numerous activities and displays for the children to participate in. These included face painting of native symbols by Nakusp Secondary arts students, drumming and dancing, how to play lacrosse and a huge teepee where traditional stories were being shared by the community elders. There were also displays of local history and by First Nations artisans.

The Burton learning centre outdoor school teacher, Dorian Boswell, also gave a presentation. This program is about safely enjoying outdoor recreational activities. Some of the units the students are engaged in are aboriginal skills, fly fishing, core B.C. hunter training, the Canadian firearm safety course, survival skills, archery and ATV safety.

The senior class can earn additional credits in entrepreneurialism. They experience research and development, marketing, management and fabrication skills. They have two successful projects currently being marketed. Mr. Boswell was demonstrating one — the EZ Lite Fire Starter, a magic fire starter that is completely waterproof and works under the most extreme conditions. It comes in a little waterproof package and is only \$20.

[1340]

Their other project is the Rollyblade, a unique fishing flasher that will change fishing. The flasher's rotation remains constant, even when the speed of the boat changes. The rollyblade is now manufactured and marketed by the learning centre students. All proceeds go to benefit the outdoor education program. The students have travelled to a number of outdoor shows, including the Vancouver International Boat Show, marketing their product.

The day was an amazing showcase of what's happening in school district 10, one of the smallest school districts in B.C., but one that is outstanding in its unique education of students.

CONSTITUENCY OFFICES FOR CHILLIWACK-KENT AREA

L. Throness: I always want to offer the very best possible service to my constituents. When I was first elected in 2013, my riding of Chilliwack-Hope was a very large riding with limited transit options between the districts of Hope and Chilliwack. Some of my more needy constituents in the community of Hope and its surrounding area found it difficult to visit my main office, so I decided to open a part-time satellite office in Hope. After four years of operation, I can say that the experiment turned out to be very helpful for hundreds of people.

In this election, my riding boundaries changed. Hope is no longer part of my responsibility, and the people I newly serve in Chilliwack live in an area very near to my constituency office. However, the growing communities in the north of my riding in Agassiz, Harrison Hot Springs and Harrison Mills, which together have the same population as Hope, must drive up to 40 minutes to visit my main office. Some of them have needs too. Therefore, I've decided to open a new satellite office in Agassiz.

Beginning next week, my office will be open every Thursday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., ready to help constituents with their needs. Just as they did in Hope, my staff will work hard to advocate to the government on their behalf.

What better day could there be than Canada Day to open a new constituency office? I'm inviting the community to add the grand opening of my new constituency office to their Canada Day celebrations this Saturday. Between 2 o'clock and 3 o'clock this Saturday afternoon, we'll be serving cake at our new office located at 7402 Pioneer Avenue right on Agassiz's main street beside the Work B.C. office. I hope that people north of the river will spread the word that we're open for business in a location that's most convenient for them as we continue to offer the very best service we can.

FILIPINO COMMUNITY AND PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY

M. Elmore: I rise today to celebrate the gains of the Filipino-Canadian community on the occasion of the 119th anniversary of Philippine Independence Day, which was commemorated on June 12.

In the 1950s, when the first Philippine consulate was established in Vancouver, a *Victoria Times-Colonist* story interviewing the new consul said that there were zero Filipinos across Canada. Today there are over 800,000 across the country, and for the past few years, the Philippines is the number one source country for immigrants.

This is one of the fastest-growing immigrant communities in our province in the country today. Filipinos are in communities from Kamloops to Cranbrook, from Prince

Rupert.... Of course, many have settled in the Lower Mainland, especially in my diverse riding of Vancouver-Kensington.

Over the past years, many able Filipino community leaders, businesses and organizations have established and contributed much to the various communities they reside and work in.

This past month I've been privileged to attend many Filipino community events organized to mark Philippine Independence Day and have seen many of my colleagues here at these events, including the United Filipino-Canadian Association in B.C., with a flag-raising gala dinner, *Pista ng Bayan* on July 9 in Vancouver-Kensington; the Royal City Sister City Society flag-raising and festival in New Westminster; Metro Vancouver Filipino arts and culture society — a two-day festival in North Vancouver, earlier this month; MHHs, a flag-raising and all-day event festival in Richmond; the Filipino Association of Chilliwack with a festival there; the Surrey Philippine Independence Day Society; the Victoria Filipino-Canadian Association dinner and dance; and, of course, the Philippine consulate consular reception.

There are many more events in the Okanagan and around the Lower Mainland organized by many community events. The Filipino community is well known for its *bayanihan* spirit — a spirit of hospitality and cooperation. As such, I'd like to invite everybody to join me in the next event — the *Pista ng Bayan* on July 9 in my riding.

In closing, I would like to pay tribute to this very vibrant community. I'm certain that we'll see much more from this emerging community and hear more stories of its success across the province in the House.

CHERRY PICKING BY QUEBEC YOUTH IN OKANAGAN AREA

L. Larson: Every year in the late spring, young people from Quebec start to arrive in the Okanagan. There is a certain element that has come to holiday, but the majority have come to pick cherries — a tradition that crossed generations. Many come because their parents came in their youth, and after more than 60 years, perhaps even some grandparents were part of that spring migration.

[1345]

While many farms have grown and need a semi-permanent or permanent workforce over a longer period of time, there are still farm operations that need cherry pickers on a daily basis. Many years ago, the Oliver Rotary Club realized there was a need for a place for this influx of workers to camp, and in partnership with the town of Oliver and the province, acquired a piece of Crown land and created a camping area — the first and still the only one in the Okanagan.

To recognize and thank this migrant workforce from Quebec, the town of Oliver, in partnership with the

Oliver and district community recreation centre, hold a St-Jean-Baptiste barbecue for the pickers. Held in Lions Park in Oliver, there is lots of food and entertainment and even a few speeches to mark the occasion on June 23, every year.

While many locals feel the French-Canadian youth are just there for a holiday, the community does recognize the importance of the migrant workforce to agriculture and the economic impact of not getting the fruit off the trees. Many farmers are dependent on this workforce to get their cherries to market.

This migrant workforce moves from the South Okanagan–Similkameen to the North and Central Okanagan and over to the East Kootenay as the cherries ripen. Eventually, this tradition of students coming from Quebec will probably become a thing of the past, but thanks to the community of Oliver for recognizing the value of this workforce with a community party every year.

ED SHUM AND
RILEY PARK COMMUNITY GARDEN

G. Heyman: Ed Shum is well known in the Riley Park neighbourhood of Vancouver-Fairview. He's a longtime resident who has been a small business owner, an active member of the local bridge club and served on the board of the community association. But Ed is best known for being a key figure in the local food and gardening community.

Twenty years ago Ed helped create the Riley Park garden for seniors across the street from his home. To this day, the garden serves as a place for seniors to build social connections, to remain active in their later years and to grow healthy food. At nearly 88 years old, Ed continues to be a leader in Riley Park, helping to maintain the seniors garden and inspiring many others to be connected with both their community and their food security.

Last Saturday Riley Park community members gathered beside the garden to celebrate Ed's many years of service. Longtime friends and neighbours shared stories of his work ethic, his leadership and his kindness. Although a soft-spoken and modest man, it's clear that Ed has made a strong impression on the community and is highly respected and treasured by everyone who knows him. These stories and Ed's continued involvement in the community have helped preserve local history that too often vanishes over time.

That same day we celebrated the opening of a new community garden across the park from Ed's seniors garden. The garden meets the need for a community gathering place, promoting the values of inclusiveness, engagement and food security that Ed helped to develop. As this new garden grows, so too will a new generation of gardeners and community builders.

Thank you, Ed, for your ongoing service.

Congratulations to our Riley Park neighbours on your new community garden.

FORT ST. JOHN
INTERNATIONAL AIR SHOW

D. Davies: It's a pleasure to rise here today and bring awareness to this House and the constituents of my riding of Peace River North.

For any tourist visiting Peace River North, this month and 2017 mark the 25th anniversary of the Fort St. John International Air Show — another great activity for our region and for our province as all of us here celebrate Canada's 150th birthday.

Our community will be celebrating this air show on July 22 and 23. I'm excited to say that the organizers have put on an exciting event for us.

They're going to be bringing back the one and only Canadian Forces Snowbirds, the incredible CF-18 fighter demonstration and Canada's own military parachute team, the SkyHawks.

In addition, Third Strike wing-walker Carol Pilon will be joining us this year. Carol is the only Canadian wing-walker and will defy gravity as she amazes the crowds with her wing-walking skills.

For those World War II buffs, Yellow Thunder joins us this year, as well, with their Harvard formation team.

Events like this in our community would not take place without the help of several hundred volunteers. I would encourage anybody interested in lending a hand to help the Fort St. John International Air Show to contact the organization. They can be emailed at info@fsjairshow.com.

It is a great way to get involved in the show and meet new people and help out at the same time.

I would also like to extend a sincere thank you to Darlene Hamre, the show producer of the Fort St. John International Air Show, for her tireless commitment to the show over these years and all that she does for the community year after year.

[1350]

Finally, I would also like to briefly include further thanks to Bob and Lori Slater, Marion Ewasiuk, Ed Wesenberg, Denise Spence and Mike Morris, who worked hard to help me get to this place.

Oral Questions

CHILD CARE SERVICES

C. James: Yesterday we saw one more example in a long list of shameful tactics by the B.C. Liberals to try and hang on to power. We heard the Premier claim that she won't ask for a new election, but she'd be happy to recommend one if anybody asked her opinion.

While the Premier plays games, real people need help. Shelley Sheppard and some of her family mem-

bers are here with us today. They lost their son Mac in an unlicensed child care home. I can't imagine the horror and the grief that they've endured. They know firsthand how tragic it is when families can't find safe, quality, affordable child care, and they want government to fix the mess that has been created by 16 years of the B.C. Liberals.

My question is to the Premier. Why is the Premier more interested in launching a new election campaign than in letting a new government get down to work and create safe, affordable child care in this province?

Hon. C. Clark: First, to the individuals that the member has introduced today, I would add my most profound condolences. I have only one child. For every parent, losing a child is the most frightening thing that you can ever imagine. I can imagine actually losing a child.... I can't imagine actually going through that. So our condolences to them.

For all of those people who are waiting for child care in British Columbia, I would add this. Our government has a plan that's been presented in the throne speech — not to deliver child care in ten years, not to deliver it according to a plan that's failed in Quebec and produced four-year waiting lists for people, which will not make life any easier for people who are looking for child care now, but a plan that would start a billion-dollar investment now and, over the next four years, create 73,000 new child care spaces and increase subsidies for parents earning up to \$100,000.

We are going to ensure that more children are eligible for subsidies, that there are more spaces available for parents and that more child care educators get the quality training that they need to do the best job possible. If that member wants to provide stability and wants to provide a plan for the people that she's speaking on behalf of today, she should make sure that the throne speech passes, and we can move on with making that billion-dollar investment over the next four years.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

C. James: Shelley and her husband, Chris, and their family have turned their grief into action. They've become fierce advocates for safe, quality, affordable child care. They want a new government to get to work, a government that they can trust, a government and a Premier that actually work for them. They know that B.C. Liberal inaction is responsible for the massive shortage of child care spaces that families desperately need in this province. They know that until just eight days ago, the Premier said that child care was a luxury the government just couldn't afford.

Actions speak louder than words. My question is for the Premier. Why can't the Premier understand that families like Shelley and Chris's would rather get to work on

a child care plan than watch the Premier try and force another election in this province?

[1355]

Hon. C. Clark: Of course, what the member fails to mention — quite purposefully, I'm sure — is the fact that her party's plan for child care will not deliver affordable, urgently needed child care to anyone in British Columbia that they need now. Their plan includes a ten-year roll-out that would mean kids today would have their driver's licence by the time that child care was available for many of them.

The plan that we've presented to this House, which I would hope she would support, reflects the desire of everybody in this House, in a genuine effort to reach across party lines, to speak to the issues that are of concern to all of us here — and also to the ones that British Columbians expressed in the election — but to do it in a way that makes sense, to do it not only in a way that we can afford, but in a way that is going to deliver these services to people now.

One of the things that we've done very well over the last six years that I've been Premier is make sure that our economy is working. So we see huge growth in our economy. We will grow by 3.7 percent; we are now. Let's make sure that we can apply those principles, good sound management principles — not with some plan from the back of a napkin that'll take ten years to implement, but a real plan that will deliver \$1 billion into child care over the next four years, make it more affordable for families, create more spaces and make sure that we have the educated staff that we need to make sure it's of the highest possible quality.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

A. Kang: In Burnaby-Deer Lake, the B.C. Liberals are failing our students with special needs who need help the most. Christie Lee was diagnosed with autism at age five. She entered school with full recommendations to receive speech therapy. But the B.C. Liberals have underfunded supports for students like Christie and left our school district with one full-time speech pathologist shared among three schools, with 500 children to support. This means students like Christie are getting as little as five months of help in a school year.

Why is the Premier more interested in forcing a summer election, rather than letting a new government help students like Christie?

Hon. M. Bernier: Thank you to the member opposite for her question in the chamber here today.

You know, it's something that we take very seriously within the Ministry of Education. In fact, we have almost \$1 billion a year that we invest right now to help

students with special needs, right around the province in all the school districts, including the member opposite's school district.

Over the last few years, we also had what was called the learning improvement fund. We've worked with the school districts, where it was distributed around the province, where they were able to hire special assistant teachers, with the supports in the classroom to help those specific students. It's something that we're really proud of. We've been putting the resources in the classrooms. We've been spending, year after year, record amounts of funding in education to make sure we have those resources and those supports in the classrooms for the students, just as the member opposite has put forward.

Also, in our budget, we continue to put more money forward. Our Speech from the Throne also had more money, going forward, to be able to help the students specifically addressed by the member opposite, which I assume the members are going to be supporting today.

COOPERATION IN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

A. Weaver: Yesterday the Premier held a press conference in the rose garden, where she stated: "This isn't a working Legislature, and I haven't seen any evidence that it could work." She further stated: "There's no effort on the part of either opposition party to work together."

She implied that because her government, the government under her leadership, has been unable to advance its agenda — frankly, our agenda — the only option is to subject British Columbia to another election. For weeks, the Premier has delayed a confidence vote that she knows she will lose. Instead, her government has chosen to play political games that are designed to undermine cooperation and stability.

Let me be clear. Stability does not depend on this Premier holding on to power. The Greens stand ready to work with all parties...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members.

A. Weaver: ...once the government has demonstrated that it has the confidence of the House.

Mr. Speaker: Member, one minute.
Members, the Chair will hear the question.

[1400]

A. Weaver: My question to the Premier is this. Can the Premier clarify why she made this statement when the majority of members in this House stand ready and willing to work together?

Mr. Speaker: Premier, through the Chair.

Hon. C. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, that member campaigned hard in the election on saying that he was going to be different. Instead, what he has done is decided to just be more of the same. That member campaigned in the election saying that he was going to be an independent voice in this Legislature, and instead what he's done is decided to sit there and take orders from one of the major parties rather than making up his own mind.

That member said that he supported campaign finance reform and then refused to even look at it when it was proposed in this Legislature. And now that member stands up and says that he's willing to work with anybody. Nobody believes you anymore.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

A. Weaver: It's good to see the Premier acting like the Leader of the Official Opposition in a response to my question here.

We've been very clear. This government needs to test the confidence of this House before this government can actually claim that it is not working. You know, again, yesterday the Premier told the press, in the rose garden, this: "I don't see a path forward. I don't see any evidence that it can work." I think, more aptly, the Premier has found that there is no evidence that the B.C. Liberal government can work, as it lacks the confidence of this House.

The Greens again have made it clear. We are ready to work with all parties once government has demonstrated...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members, the Chair will hear the question.

A. Weaver: It's remarkable. They're getting ready to be in opposition yet again.
Once again...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members, the Chair will hear the question.

A. Weaver: We've got a feisty bunch on the other side.

Mr. Speaker: The question, Member.

A. Weaver: Again: once the government has demonstrated that it has the confidence of the House.

It's very clear to us. It's very clear to the legislative press gallery. It's very clear to the people in British Columbia that this Premier is trying to actually have an election

because she knows that she doesn't have the confidence of the House.

Again, my question....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members, the Chair will hear the question.

And the question, Member?

A. Weaver: Again, I encourage the members opposite to read the columns in the paper today by the....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Members.

Member, take....

The Chair will hear the question, Members.

A. Weaver: As I've said earlier...

Mr. Speaker: And could you move to the question?

A. Weaver: ...it's time for this lot to be put in a time-out. They're acting like belligerent children who are kicking and screaming as they're going into that time-out.

Mr. Speaker: Member, the Chair will hear a question.

A. Weaver: Thank you. My question to the Premier.... Can the Premier please clarify why she made this statement again when the majority of members are here in the House ready and willing to work together?

Hon. C. Clark: That member, for the last seven days, or the days that we've sat, has rejected two pieces of legislation that during the election, he campaigned very hard and said that he supported, including campaign finance reform. He has stood in this House. We've seen the spectacle of the Opposition House Leader whispering orders to him and coming down and telling him how to vote.

[1405]

We have watched as this member has steadfastly refused to work with members in this House on issues with which he said he profoundly agrees. And now he is saying: "Trust me. I do want to work with everybody — just not now." And now he is saying....

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Member. Member.

Hon. C. Clark: After saying to his constituents: "I do want to work with everybody. I do want the Legislature to be different. I don't want to be part of this arena where good ideas are rejected just for political reasons...." He

wasn't telling the truth about that then, and he isn't telling the truth about what he is saying today.

Mr. Speaker: Premier....

A. Weaver: Can I ask that you...?

Some Voices: Withdraw.

Mr. Speaker: Premier, can you withdraw?

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. The Chair heard the withdrawal.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR YOUTH

M. Dean: Parents like Ali Berman struggle because life here isn't affordable, and the help that they need is just not there for her family. She is a single mom of three, and her teenaged son desperately needs mental health supports. But after 16 years of the choices of this Liberal government, help isn't available for her family.

My question is for the Premier. Can she tell Ali why she is more interested in forcing an election than letting a new government get to work for her and her family?

Hon. M. Polak: I know all of us who are parents in this House are very sensitive to the issues that can develop from time to time for young people who have mental health issues that need to be taken care of right away. A delay can be extremely traumatic not only for the child but for the family trying to support them.

That's why the Ministry of Health spends about \$1½ billion each and every year on mental health and substance use services. The Ministry of Children and Family Development then spends an additional \$110 million.

But for that member who is here in the House today on this historic occasion, she has a chance to support a throne speech that will add additional contributions: a minister of state for mental health, addiction and recovery; an expert panel on mental health; the expansion of the Foundry program, which is a groundbreaking program that helps young people; and a centre for mental health and addictions in Surrey.

The member has an opportunity here today to vote in favour of the kinds of additional supports that we are now able to provide because of our strong economy and our attention to managing the people's money.

SURREY FOOD BANK OPERATIONS

G. Begg: I rise today to bring the attention of the House to a situation in Surrey in which business has increased so greatly and there is so much demand for the services

that the organization has opened up an evening depot to serve those who can't make it during the daytime hours. For the first time ever, they have had to add an evening shift to accommodate the increased demand. They also have a special afternoon shift now only for seniors.

Unfortunately, the business is the Surrey Food Bank, and their increase is in the working poor who have to access the facility after working hours simply to put food on the table.

The Premier is fond of painting a rosy picture and of ignoring the plight of the poor among us. But since she's been Premier, the number of people who have to rely on food banks has grown three times faster than the population.

[1410]

My question is simple. Why is the Premier more interested in calling an election than allowing a new government to get on with the business of dealing with the needs of all of the people of British Columbia?

Hon. C. Clark: Thank you to the member for the question. Welcome to our Legislature, and congratulations on your election.

We all know that the best way out of poverty.... By the way, since the last NDP government in British Columbia, child poverty has been reduced by 50 percent. But the member makes a valid point. There is still a very, very long way to go in reducing poverty in our province.

So we propose to raise the social assistance rate by \$100 a month — as was also proposed, I think, by the NDP in the last election. We've also increased disability rates twice, and we will be indexing them to inflation. In addition to that, more importantly, we are working on supporting a strong economy that's going to create jobs and supporting people to find their way into those jobs.

Government can do one thing, and that's support a strong economy — 180,000 new jobs over the last two years, the strongest record anywhere in the country. But we need programs like the single-parent employment program and the LIFT program to support parents with their child care, with their training, while they can still stay in jobs if they have them, or still stay on social assistance if that's what they need, so that they can get the training they need to find a new job in this fast-growing economy that we have.

We need to work on both sides of this equation. And frankly, on this side of the House, we really are the only people in this Legislature who have a plan to both grow the economy and make sure we take that wealth and use it to support people in finding their way out of poverty.

SUPPORTS FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS

K. Chen: Genevieve was a hard-working young graduate from Simon Fraser University who worked multiple jobs to cover her rent, tuition and other expenses. She

could not make ends meet, so she had to rely on the university's food bank to get by. Students like Genevieve need a government that supports them as they try to make their lives better. Instead, the B.C. Liberals have neglected them for 16 years, and things have become so unaffordable that students are having to use food banks.

My question is for the Premier. Why is the Premier more interested in forcing an election than letting a new government get to work for students like Genevieve?

Hon. C. Clark: Well, I can tell that member — and by the way, welcome to the Legislature as well — what doesn't work. What doesn't work is a government that goes broke because it spends more money than the economy will earn. We've seen that example in British Columbia, and we've seen it many, many times across the country and around the world. We need to keep this economy strong if we're going to be able to support individuals like the one that the member has named.

We need to be able to create wealth in British Columbia from a growing economy so that we have more to share. But in addition to that, we need to make sure that as this growth happens in our province, we manage the growth and we build the transit and the housing for middle-class people that's necessary to make sure the growth happens in the way that we want — and invest \$1 billion in child care so that that's available for working parents no matter where they live in British Columbia.

Those investments are possible — and they certainly are possible, the ones that are proposed in this throne speech — because our economy is growing the fastest, by far, of any in Canada.

So I hope that if that member finds herself on this side of the House someday soon, she will remind her leader how important economic growth really is. Because British Columbia can't stop growing.

[1415]

The country needs us. Working people need us. And people who are struggling to find a way to get ahead need all of us to work together to make sure that this economy can provide for them the things they need to keep life affordable.

CARE AIDE WORKERS AND SENIORS CARE

R. Glumac: Deborah is a care aide in my constituency. She has worked at Eagle Ridge Hospital for 22 years, and she does her best to help the patients in her care. But the Premier has made it harder for Deborah to do her job. There are fewer care aides in the hospital, working longer hours and spending less time with their patients. Last year a frustrated patient attacked her, and she spent the last several months with broken teeth, facial scars and ongoing pain.

Why does the Premier seem more interested in spending millions of dollars on a new election rather than in

letting a new government get to work improving the conditions for health care workers and patients in Eagle Ridge Hospital?

Hon. M. Polak: Those seniors, those who are in long-term residential care, are people that we must, as a wealthy society, take care of and be generous to. Those who work to support them, the care aides, are people who not only have a high degree of skill; they have big hearts. They do tremendous work each and every day. It's one of the reasons why we have, as Ministry of Health, developed the home and community care action plan. That means that \$500 million is being invested in that. Of that, \$275 million is going directly into home and community care.

Even more importantly, we're paying attention to the direct care needs. That means ensuring that the average reaches where it should, at 3.36 hours per day. That's something we've committed to. In addition, and more importantly to the member's question, we are also adding 1,500 additional staff.

When we look at the throne speech and the commitment we have there, not only can we see that the progress I've just outlined will be valuable, but in addition, the member has the opportunity today, I believe, to support a throne speech that will then add an additional 500 residential care beds. Those will be with enforceable standards for direct care.

R. Singh: For 16 years, the B.C. Liberals have allowed staffing levels at B.C. seniors homes to fall to levels below the government's own standards. Josephine Drummel Narkwis is a care aide in Vancouver. After her job was contracted out 13 years ago, her patient load increased. She has far less time to help the seniors that she deeply cares for. She and her colleagues are overwhelmed and have to choose which patients they actually have time to help.

My question is to the Premier. Why would she force an election instead of getting out of the way and letting a new government get to work in helping British Columbians?

Hon. C. Clark: A warm welcome, as well, to the member for Surrey–Green Timbers. To her question. I think the Minister of Health has spoken to much of that question, including the fact that we are, in the throne speech, proposing to train 112 more family doctors, faster access to MRI and hip and knee procedures, and introducing wait-time guarantees, in addition to expanding and making sure that all facilities are meeting the standards when it comes to long-term care, wherever they happen to be in British Columbia.

The reason we can do all these things is because British Columbia has the means to do so. British Columbians are the healthiest people in Canada, and

we have amongst the best health outcomes anywhere in the country.

[1420]

We need to keep making those investments as our population ages and, of course, as technology gets more expensive. And we need to make sure we keep making those investments because people want and expect them. The way we can make those investments is not by promising hospitals for ten years and never building them, which is certainly what we saw from a previous government. It's by making sure that we have the means and the plan to make sure that we can get these things done.

British Columbia's economy is on track to grow by 3.7 percent. It's three times the national average. Our employment growth is 3.6 percent. Not only does that give us the means to look after one another. It means — and the member should not forget this for a minute — that when the economy is growing, it is not just a number. Those are jobs for real people, and they are jobs for families.

Should the member find herself on this side of the House, I hope she will remember to speak up on behalf of keeping projects going, of supporting the resource sector — not cancelling Site C, as her party has promised to do. Those jobs matter for British Columbia families, and so do the resources that they provide so that we can look after one another in the way British Columbians deserve.

[End of question period.]

Orders of the Day

Hon. M. de Jong: Continued debate on the throne speech.

Throne Speech Debate

(continued)

On the amendment *(continued)*.

Hon. M. Polak: I rise to continue my comments in opposition to the proposed amendment. I had spoken about some of the people that I have found most inspiring to me in my life. I want to now offer some words of thanks, as many of us have in this House. I will join them.

I want to thank my constituency assistants, Cathy Gibbs and Gabrielle DeGroot. The amount of support that these ladies give me in my constituency office is truly amazing.

I want to speak in particular about Cathy Gibbs. Cathy Gibbs has not only been my constituency assistant, but she's a longtime constituency assistant, having served for Lynn Stephens back in the day when she was in this House. Cathy brings a wealth of experience, but she also brings an absolutely huge heart, a heart that longs to give to people and help them, sometimes to her own detriment.

In fact, from time to time, we remind Cathy that occasionally her heart swells up so largely that it cuts off...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. M. Polak: ...the circulation to her brain. She acts on behalf of others and doesn't think about herself.

I want to honour Cathy Gibbs in particular, but also Gabrielle DeGroot in my office — a young lady who's more recent to my office and has taken to personally assisting some of the individual folks living on our streets in downtown Langley, to the point where she buys them things. She tries to take them and get them help, talk them into getting help. She's relentless. She's tireless. I know the people that she helps genuinely appreciate it.

My campaign certainly drew in an awful lot of supporters. It's so humbling when people will come and give their time to you just because they believe in you.

[1425]

I want to thank my campaign manager, Derek Robertson. I want to thank my election day chair, Martina Kapac de Frias, and of course Shirley Stewart, John Hof and his sign crew and all of our volunteers.

Our riding association. All of us, regardless of party, have a local association of volunteers who do the thankless task of keeping all of the operations of our electoral districts running. I want to acknowledge our president, Linda Letkemann, Sam Wind, Colin Kellner, Wayne Jefferson, Jim McGregor, Noah Daniel and Doug Kellner — tremendous volunteers. Always there to lift me up when I'm feeling down and give a word of encouragement, and if you need some help, they're there.

[R. Chouhan in the chair.]

During the campaign, we also were the beneficiaries of the generosity of two other people I want to acknowledge. Dennis Martini came forward early on and offered us the use of some tremendous space that he had that we could use for our campaign office, and we greatly, greatly appreciate that generosity.

Then Peter Heppner from Preston Chevrolet in Langley offered and delivered on, providing a fully electric Chevy Volt that was wrapped in my campaign colours, which I used to drive around during the campaign. I must say — not that we're supposed to give endorsements — that was the first time I had driven, regularly, a fully electric vehicle. For anybody who's thinking of it, it was really quite a joy to drive. Of course, these days, the technology has improved such that you can pull the car into your garage at night, plug it in, and it's ready to go the next morning. Thank you very much to Peter, as well, for that.

I come from the riding of Langley, and Langley is a mix of rural and urban. In fact, we often say that Langley is

on the threshold of the Fraser Valley. It has areas of very rapid growth where there are many young families moving in and, at the same time, has quite a thriving agricultural and equestrian community as well.

We have a significant seniors population and a reputation for volunteerism. We have very, very many active service clubs, churches and not-for-profits who give our community its fantastic heart.

You might also be surprised to know that Langley has welcomed a significant number of Syrian refugees. I had the privilege of being welcomed by them to a thank-you barbecue in our community. Multiple levels of government, federal, municipal, our constituency office, not-for-profits, agencies and the RCMP had worked together to try and ensure that these families arriving would receive all the services that were necessary to support them.

What did they do? A short time after being in this country they decided to host a barbecue to thank all the people who had helped them to settle.

On that day, I was watching as some of the speeches were given, and there was a small child, probably about five years old, sitting with some friends. They were drawing with chalk on the pavement. It was quite a hot day. The RCMP helicopter flew over, because they were keeping an eye on the situation. We had a large gathering, and there were some tensions at the time in the news.

What struck me was that this five-year-old child had never known life without war, and when that helicopter went over, you could see him flinching. What did that mean, right? There's a helicopter. It probably means something bad is going to fall from the sky.

I say that because I think we all must remember that the democracy that we are working through here creates the communities that we all enjoy, and it is something we must never take for granted, because in other parts of the world, you have children who have never known anything but war. Here we are with the privilege in Canada to be able to welcome these families into a community that will support them and where their children can grow up in peace and — who knows? — maybe someday be an MLA in this Legislature. It reminds us all that the heart and soul of our communities is truly displayed when we welcome others.

[1430]

I grew up in Cloverdale, which is about five minutes away or so from Langley, so I've witnessed the changes that have taken place in Langley. The townhouse I now live in is on land that, when I was growing up, I think was a chicken farm. Certainly, there was nothing but bush and big acreages around there. Now there are thousands of families living in high-density development in the Willoughby area in Langley.

It's an exciting place to be, but that growth, that change, also brings its challenges. Growth, while it's been an opportunity for Langley, has also, of course, been a challenge. It's one that calls all levels of government to

respond to. Our government has responded to many of these challenges in Langley.

Traffic congestion. Imagine, in Langley, before the two overpasses were built — all of that during the time that I have had the privilege to be in this chamber. Before those two overpasses were built above the railway, Langley had five level crossings in four square miles, with a curving track that meant that when the coal trains went through — and they do, 24 per day — they blocked traffic in all directions. The traffic estimates at the time said that it took 20 minutes to clear after you had that big blockage.

We were able, as a government, to provide the funding to build those overpasses. So now not only can commuters travel through the city, but our emergency services can also make sure that they can get to where they need to on time.

Of course, our community was thrilled to see the construction of the Port Mann Bridge, the widening of Highway 1, and, for the first time, we have ExpressBus service that can get you from north Langley to a SkyTrain in about 15 minutes.

But these kinds of things continue. Growth continues. Challenges continue. One of the reasons that I'm opposed to the amendment is because, in my community, the throne commitment to respond positively and fund the ten-year plan for the mayors to provide rapid transit all the way from Squamish out to Chilliwack.... Those kind of things are what my community wants. Those kind of things are things I want to vote in favour of, and I would hope that other members of this House would as well.

Growth also brings with it health care pressures, and we've certainly seen that in Langley. We have a very dedicated group of volunteers who work with the Langley Memorial Hospital Foundation — tremendous fundraisers, tremendous community commitment. Throughout the years, they have worked together with us to ensure that there has been hospice expansion, an expansion and improvement of the maternity facilities and also the addition of tertiary mental health supports. We have a new emergency department on the way.

Again, one of the reasons I am speaking in opposition to this amendment is because the throne speech commitments around health are extremely important in my community: making sure that we increase and improve the availability of ambulance services, making sure that we increase the number of surgeries, making sure that we increase the availability and access to MRIs. All of those things are very important in my community, so I want to see the commitments in the throne speech supported. I want to see them go ahead.

Education is another area where growth has really challenged the community of Langley. We have had schools that have been bursting at the seams, but we've been able to respond. Myself and the member for Langley East regularly meet with our school trustees and work together to plan how we can respond to their capital

needs. I am very proud of the progress we've made building new elementary schools, expanding one of the elementary schools in my area, R.C. Garnett, to make sure that it's got more spaces. Two hundred more spaces are being added. Then, of course, we have a new high school on the way in the Willoughby area.

That commitment has meant that we've been able to respond to the growth. We've also been able to fund equipment, textbooks, buses. But as I look at our growing community, and having been a school trustee for ten years, I know that it's time to take another look at how we manage education in this province. It's been 30 years since the last Royal Commission on Education, one that provided very valuable insight into education in British Columbia going forward.

[1435]

Again, one of the reasons I am speaking in opposition to the amendment is because of the throne speech commitment to review the funding formula, paying attention to fast-growing areas like mine and ensuring that we have a royal commission to review just how education ought to be conducted in British Columbia. Those things are very important to my community. They're very important to the families who live there.

Child care. At one time, I was the minister responsible for child care, and I'm well familiar with the pressures there are and with the challenges that parents face. I used to hear about them every day. I hear about it in my community too. In Langley, there are very, very many young families, and they are challenged to find those spaces, especially if different parents work in different locations, children go to different schools because of their age difference. It can be very challenging.

Already our government had committed to 13,000 new spaces, and of course, we have had generous subsidies for low-income families. But it was time to do more, and we certainly heard that during this last election.

That's why I want to see the throne speech commitment go forward: 60,000 new spaces in four years, full subsidy for families who are earning up to \$60,000, partial subsidy for families who are earning up to \$100,000. That covers an additional 150,000 children in four years. And \$10 million in grants and bursaries — that's going to add 4,000 early childhood educators to the ranks. Those are things that I support and are another reason why I don't support the amendment to the throne speech.

I've talked about growth and how that has impacted the Langley area. Another thing that has impacted us significantly is our aging population. Langley does have a very high proportion of seniors. We are fortunate in that we have very excellent services provided by government, by private operators, by not-for-profits. Already we've invested \$500 million to improve seniors care, and \$275 million of that is directed to home and community care services. Those are hugely important.

My dad, who, fortunately, still lives on his own and independently, I don't think would be able to without the supports that he receives from agencies such as Langley Home Health. The services that are there are fantastic, but we're going to need to do more.

That's why I want to see this throne speech succeed — so that we can get on with adding 500 more residential care beds, so we can double the home renovation tax credit, which also assists seniors in adjusting their house situation so that they can stay, and creating a new respite tax credit.

I know from those who are my friends and who are in similar situations with aging parents — and sometimes those who are spouses of people who need additional care — that if you are the caregiver, that can take a real toll on you, not just emotionally and spiritually, but it can take a toll on your very health as well. So that respite care is hugely important.

Even though Langley retains much of its small-town feel, the challenges that we face are becoming more and more similar to large urban centres. We're now starting to see some of those in the Langley area.

First, I would talk about housing affordability. Now, thanks to mayors and councils from both of the Langleys, there are many new homes, including purpose-built rental, that are being constructed in Langley. They are selling out like hotcakes. The rental vacancy rate in Langley is extremely low, and in spite of the addition of new units in Langley, we're still seeing the prices continue to rise.

We have responded as a government with initiatives such as the rental assistance program, Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters and then, more recently, the HOME program, which has seen hundreds of middle-class families be able to get that chance to have the down payment to purchase their first home.

But we can do more. One of the reasons I oppose the amendment that has been proposed is because I want to see the initiatives in the throne speech go forward. I think we can do even more, working with local government, to see more units built, to see more supply there for the people who want to have a home in the community that they love.

[1440]

I believe that we can work well with the private sector to achieve, I think, a really groundbreaking idea. That is the rent-to-own program — working with the private sector to build 50,000 units of new housing that would go into that program for middle-class families. It'll help those middle-class families who are currently renters to grow equity. They'd be able to see their monthly rent build up until they were in a position to see that buildup turn into a down payment and, ultimately, be able to purchase and own the home.

Specifically for renters: stopping landlords from getting around the kind of rent control protections that are there when the leases expire, protecting the legal rights of

tenants and landlords, ensuring that these kinds of transactions take place in a fair way — one that considers the interests of all who are concerned.

Another challenge that is facing our community is a growing street population. Of course, for many of these individuals, mental health and substance use issues play a really big role in their circumstances.

Not that long ago, a couple of months ago — maybe three months ago, by now — my constituency assistant and I did something that we do from time to time. We went out with the RCMP, only this time we didn't do the traditional ride-along. We were following up on a homelessness forum that we had hosted in the community, and we wanted to get a chance to talk directly to some of those folks who are living on our streets.

So rather than the usual ride-along, we went with the officer. We picked up some cups of Tims, and although I'm the Minister of Health, so I frown on this, he also brought along some cigarettes to share with people who may want one, but as a means of being able to have a friendly and informative conversation with some of these folks.

We met all types. We met young people. One of the young fellows I talked to was from Alberta. He had only a year ago been in the oil patch making a whole lot of money, but he got addicted to drugs. He lost everything. He's on the street. He's a young man, but he's going to need some significant help to get back on his feet. A young lady did have a place to live, but then, as a result of a relationship breakup, found herself on the streets.

Then we met a number of gentlemen who were, I'd say, in the neighbourhood of 55 plus. Their story was somewhat different. For them, many of them — if not all — had been living on the street on and off for decades.

What this showed us, and what I certainly know from talking with our previous Minister of Health, is that the challenges facing the street population, whether it's in Langley or Vancouver or anywhere else, are extremely complex. It's not as simple as affordable housing. It's not as simple as just making sure they have cash supports such as social assistance. All those things are an element. They're all important. They all play a role. But no single one of them is going to do what is needed to try and get these people into a stable situation where they can truly enjoy a good life.

All levels of government in Langley have stepped up to the plate. We've seen the work that went into developing the Gateway of Hope, not-for-profits like food banks, churches, B.C. Housing, and this year, this summer, we have an intensive case management team being located in Langley.

I support the throne speech and don't support the amendment because I want to see the \$100 increase to social assistance rates. I want to make sure that harm reduction services and systems of care and recovery are readily available to people. I want to see an expansion of things

like the Foundry program for youth mental health and substance use. I want to see the centre for mental health and addictions in Surrey fast-tracked.

We can do it because we have a healthy economy. A \$2.8 billion surplus, 3.7 percent growth, lowest unemployment — all of these things allow us to look beyond that person who is living a terrible life on our streets and, instead, envision for them a future that we have the ability to afford to give them.

[1445]

Hon. T. Wat: It is certainly an honour and privilege for me to rise in the House today to speak to the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech from the Throne and against any amendment.

First of all, I would like to take this special moment to recognize some of the people whose help and support are very important to me. To those who have elected me for the second term to represent them in the Legislature, I'm truly honoured and humbled by the vote of support and belief in me to return to this House to represent the riding of Richmond North Centre.

To those who have volunteered their time and efforts to support my campaign and my political journey. They are my riding secretaries of the Richmond North Centre Riding Association: Chad Pederson, Wayne Duzita, David Choi, Rob Howard, Andrew Wong, Richard Thomas, Abby Wang, Victor Qin, Leana Li and Julia Yan.

Also, to my campaign team, led by my campaign manager, Marissa Chan-Kent, and the many volunteers who worked tirelessly and passionately to get me re-elected. Just to name a few: Tim Oziowy, Tony Lu, Carl Hibbert, Michael Sachs, Tony W., Kitty Wong, Brenda Harnett, Nathan Kurt, Clara Chow, Hina Wang, Michael Chen, Valent Chen, Ryan and Julie Pineo, Lucy Wong, Al Lau, Han Yan, David and Betty Ma, Annie Sun, and many, many more.

Also, most importantly, to my parents, who are in their 90s. Mom and Dad, thank you for always supporting me throughout the years. To my daughter, Tin, who has encouraged and supported me in walking this very rewarding political journey. And finally, to my late husband, Stephen, who I'm sure is very proud of my political path.

I should also mention my colleagues: my chief of staff, Jay Denney; executive assistant Jessica Faddegon; administrative coordinator Angela Jones; administrative assistant Christina Starko; and my two constituency assistants, Trix Chan and David Shum.

In my last four years serving British Columbia as the Minister of International Trade and the Minister of Multiculturalism and also serving as the MLA for Richmond Centre, I have been so fortunate to have had a professional and dedicated team of four in my minister's office. They worked tirelessly and passionately to support me. And also, my two CAs, who are also working so hard to handle my constituency issues.

These two teams sacrifice their time because they believe in me and this government. They work so hard to ensure that I listen and deliver the best services to Richmond, to our province and British Columbians. Jay, Jessica, Angela, Christina, Trix and David, thanks from the bottom of my heart for all your hard work and whole-hearted support. Thank you.

I'd also like to welcome all the new members to this Legislature. I still remember how excited, how honoured and privileged I was in 2013 when I first walked into this people's House to start representing my constituents. We must always reflect the hopes and desires of British Columbians.

Our B.C. Liberal government, led by the first-ever elected female Premier in the history of British Columbia, has put forward an inclusive vision for B.C., and our plan builds a stronger future for our province.

Each year I look forward to the opportunity to talk about my portfolio and the excellent work that the Ministry of International Trade is doing to grow and diversify B.C.'s economy, to create well-paying jobs for British Columbians and to help B.C. businesses reach new priority markets overseas.

The government of British Columbia is proud to be once again delivering a balanced budget and providing essential services at the same time — the fifth balanced budget in a row that this government has delivered. In fact, our government remains on track to balance a sixth consecutive budget in 2017-18, an achievement that is out of reach for many jurisdictions. It hasn't been an easy task. We have to make hard choices and find new ways to diversify the economy and bring investment to our province.

As Minister of International Trade, I'm so proud to say that my ministry has played an important role in B.C.'s success as a stable economy. My ministry has two primary focuses: to promote trade and attract investment to the province, and to champion the benefits of B.C.'s diversity and foster participation of all British Columbians in our multicultural society.

[1450]

I am inspired by the work my ministry does on a daily basis, and I'm delighted to see our efforts resulting in more investment for our province.

Early this week Union Mobile Financial Technology — UMF of Beijing, China — launched the Canadian headquarters of its subsidiary, Union Mobile Financial Technology (Canada), in Vancouver. UMF is one of China's largest fintech companies, serving 450 million users and handling transactions worth \$130 million U.S. last year. UMF's decision to locate Canada's headquarters in Vancouver speaks to the advantages of the Vancouver region as a high-tech and fintech centre of innovation and as a growing Asian-North American trading and transaction centre.

As we know, exports provide a vital source of economic growth and job creation. Today, total exports from

B.C. are worth over \$35 billion per year, an increase of 41 percent since 2009. Part of this success has been increasing the number of trade and investment representatives abroad. B.C.'s international network has more than doubled since 2011. We now have over 60 representatives based in priority markets across Asia, Europe and the United States.

Despite a soft global economy, B.C. exports are increasing. Diversifying our export markets has played a major role in this. Ten years ago, 65 percent of our exports went to the United States, whereas last year, exports to the States made up less than 52 percent of total exports, while nearly 38 percent of exports went to Pacific Rim markets, with the top exports from B.C. being pulp, lumber and copper, with encouraging increases in seafood, agrifoods, machinery and equipment exports.

Of the eight key sectors of the B.C. jobs plan, the fastest-growing is technology. It already employs more than 86,000 British Columbians at wages 60 percent higher than the industrial average. Government wants potential high-tech companies, especially those in the early stages, to have access to the capital they need to grow. That's why we've created the \$100 million venture capital fund-of-funds to give promising companies the opportunity to thrive and generate jobs in B.C.

Forestry is also a key industry for B.C. and for the thousands of men and women whose families depend on it. That is why the government is working with its federal counterparts to renew the softwood agreement. The B.C. government takes its international trade obligations seriously.

As Minister Responsible for Multiculturalism, one of my roles is to create an environment in B.C. where an inclusive and diverse population supports our shared communities. Cultural diversity and increased participation by all cultures is vitally important to the creation of a strong social and economic future for B.C.

Over the past three years, an average of \$1.7 million has been spent annually on programs that promote multiculturalism, address racism and build inclusive communities in B.C. The B.C. Multicultural Awards annually celebrate those working throughout B.C. to promote multiculturalism, and the Chinese legacy projects are delivering on government's promise to the Chinese-Canadian community and all British Columbians to leave a lasting legacy of the historic contribution of early Chinese settlers.

Talking about multiculturalism, I'm privileged to represent the constituents of Richmond North Centre, one of the most diverse and vibrant ridings in North America. Richmond is a vibrant and diverse community projecting a population growth to over 260,000 by 2036, with more than half of the growth accounted for in Richmond North Centre. It is a great city to live and work in.

Last fall the Pacific Autism Family Network facility opened in my riding. This state-of-the-art facility for people with autism is a first for North America. The \$28

million centre will support 69,000 people of all ages in B.C. that have autism spectrum disorder. The facility includes clinics, labs, classrooms, observation rooms and research spaces. This unique facility will change the lives of families in Richmond and across the province, and I'm proud that our government contributed \$20 million towards this new centre. This facility will help empower families with loved ones who have autism to find the care they need most.

[1455]

On the retail front, the SmartCentres along Garden City Road and Alderbridge are already in operation in my riding. Many megastores, such as Walmart and Marshalls, continue to strengthen their expansion in B.C. B.C.'s first luxury outlet mall, the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet, was opened at a 30-acre site on Sea Island, near the Vancouver International Airport, last year. It currently has 46 retailers, with over 240,000 square feet. Phase 2 will expand the mall to 400,000 square feet and up to 150 retailers. It has created 600 jobs in phase 1 and will create another 400 jobs in phase 2.

Near the outlet, the British Columbia Institute of Technology, BCIT, Aerospace Technology campus offers programs to more than 1,000 students each year. Students can choose training programs from all areas of aircraft maintenance, engineering and flight training.

Many industry-leading companies are based in Richmond. This provides highly skilled workers as well as input suppliers and business support services. Richmond's aerospace and aviation sectors are made up of small family-run businesses to global publicly traded companies. It's a niche industry for Richmondites, a unique economic booster.

In November last year, I was so proud to lead Canada's B.C. delegation, with 17 strong aerospace and aviation companies and organizations, at Airshow China 2016. This largest air show in Asia has allowed our B.C. aerospace and aviation companies a very unique opportunity to showcase the energy and interest that is required to leverage partnerships, attract international investment and expand export through the trade deals.

I would also like to mention the Richmond City Centre Community Centre. It is Richmond's first urban community centre, and it's located in the heart of the ever-growing city. It provides a range of recreation programs and services tailored to residents of all ages. City Centre is new and will continue to be the area with the densest population in Richmond. The area is being developed to maximize use of the Canada Line and to be bike- and pedestrian-friendly. In addition to serving the needs of the rapidly expanding urban population, City Centre will help to animate the city area.

In City Centre, one should visit the new campus of Trinity Western University. This modern space is the new home for students to engage in bachelor's degrees and master's degree programs.

Also new in my beautiful riding of Richmond North Centre is the Kiwanis Towers, a two-tower affordable housing development for seniors funded by our government. The 294-unit development replaced an old 120-unit complex.

A major new capital building program in the Minoru civic precinct was also launched to address current and future recreation, sport, cultural, social and community wellness needs. The program includes a new aquatic centre, a new mature adult centre and space for other recreation and community needs. I'm proud of this government, which has focused on building a diverse economy and eliminating the operating debt, which paves the path towards a debt-free B.C.

It is essential to create financial stability, jobs and opportunity so that we are able to fund vital public services that British Columbians need. We should be proud of Richmond Hospital, a vital part of our community. It is a large community hospital serving the needs of residents in Richmond and Delta as well as travellers using the Vancouver International Airport and B.C. Ferries.

I'm proud that our government supports planning for a new patient care tower at Richmond Hospital. The ministry expects work on the business plan could begin in fall 2017. Up to \$3 million will be allocated to support the development of a business plan once the concept plan is approved.

British Columbia continues to be a destination for tourists and an economic driver for our province. In 2016, Vancouver International Airport carried a record 22.3 million passengers.

[1500]

YVR is also welcoming new direct flights to Europe, China, Japan and Mexico. Each new daily international flight to B.C. creates between 150 and 200 new jobs at YVR. An additional 300 to 400 jobs are created indirectly in the province at businesses such as hotels, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators.

Our advertising efforts have increased exponentially since the establishment of Destination B.C., our province's lead marketing organization. Our tourism sectors are leading the way in our province's diverse economy.

Recently I was invited by Tourism Richmond, together with my colleague for Richmond-Steveston, to join the newly launched Richmond Hop-on Hop-off Attraction Tour. The tour offers tourists an easy way to visit the key sites in Richmond, including the historic fishing village of Steveston, the Olympic Experience at the Richmond Olympic Oval, the River Rock Casino Resort, the McArthurGlen Designer Outlet mall and the hub of Asian shopping malls. Many of these sites are located in my riding of Richmond North Centre. Richmond is the third city in British Columbia to have such a hop-on, hop-off service. I'm confident that the sector will continue to bring jobs to my community in Richmond.

Our province is beautiful and unique, but there are a

few ways we need to emulate other jurisdictions across our country. More should have been done sooner, and more needs to be done now. That's why we introduced comprehensive reforms that would get big money and external influence out of B.C. politics. This includes a ban on corporate, union and third-party donations, including donations in-kind, a ban on donations from outside B.C., including federal parties, and a maximum donation limit. Again, it is very unfortunate that the opposition in this House voted down this legislation without even holding a proper debate.

It's a privilege to rise today to speak in favour of the Speech from the Throne and against any amendment. I am proud of the ambitious plan that was laid out last week, a plan that has placed the best interests of British Columbians front and centre.

It's so unfortunate that the parties opposite have already voted against an important piece of our throne speech without providing British Columbians with the courtesy of having a debate. Our government introduced a bill to reform political financing, a bill that has been asked for unanimously by all parties of this House. The opposition in this House has insisted on creating instability for our province, and they voted against political finance reform. To demand this legislation and then vote it down sends a clear signal and a sign to British Columbia that the opposition cannot be taken seriously. In fact, it's so disappointing. But the opposition in this House still has the opportunity to do well for the people of this province and to vote in favour of our Speech from the Throne.

British Columbians spoke clearly, and we listened. They want a stable government that balances economic growth, investment in social programs and environmental protections. Our B.C. Liberal government presented a renewed plan for British Columbia that makes record investments for families, while maintaining a strong economy through job creation and balanced budgets.

We have built the strongest economic foundation in Canada, created thanks to hard-working British Columbians and 16 years of sound fiscal management, which has produced a much better than expected surplus. The vision our government shared in our Speech from the Throne outlines exactly how we intend to return that surplus to British Columbians.

British Columbians expect and deserve a government that collaborates, while respecting the dignity, rules and traditions that govern our constitutional monarchy, our democracy and the Legislature. A stable government does not rely on floor-crossers, rule-changers and other parties for stability. Any change in government should happen properly in the Legislature, according to the rules and conventions of parliamentary democracy.

[1505]

In that regard, the members opposite have not shown good faith to the people of this province so far. It's troubling that the NDP still won't tell British Columbians

how they can provide a stable government for British Columbians.

It's difficult to ascertain what the opposition is trying to do in this House, but what's clear is that they do not have the best interest of the province in mind, and they do not listen to British Columbians.

Meanwhile, our government's goals and vision for the future of the province could not be clearer. Our No. 1 goal is to ensure housing is affordable for British Columbians. As B.C.'s economy continues to grow, the benefits of the economy also come with real challenges, especially for affordability.

Despite actions taken that have had a real impact, housing affordability remains a particular challenge for far too many people. That is why, with the confidence of the House, our B.C. Liberal government will work with local governments and the private sector to increase the supply of family and starter housing for middle-income earners, especially along new transit lines and corridors.

In addition, we will work with the private sector to build 50,000 units of new housing across the province over ten years that will go into a new rent-to-own program available to middle-class families. The program will help middle-class renters to grow equity through their monthly rent payments until they are in a position to own their home.

The B.C. Liberal government will also work with and support municipalities to remove obstacles and eliminate backlogs to speed up the construction of new housing supply, especially for families. To better protect renters, our government will prohibit landlords from skirting rent-control protection when term leases expire and make sure that tenants rights are respected while respecting a landlord's ability to make improvements to their buildings.

Finally, we will bring together and welcome the ideas from all parties and participants at a housing summit to be convened in fall 2017. Real estate speculation will be one of the challenges put before participants.

As it was pointed out by the Lieutenant-Governor during the Speech from the Throne, our province has created more jobs than anywhere in Canada since the start of the B.C. jobs plan, has grown an economy that is the envy of Canada and maintained five consecutive balanced budgets, thanks to careful management. All of this is because of the hard work of British Columbians.

Now the time has come for us to return the economic benefits to the great people of our province. Our Speech from the Throne outlined exactly how we intend to do that. With the confidence of this House, we will implement our plans immediately. British Columbians seek a better balance between economic, social and environmental priorities.

I would like to conclude by saying that as we continue to grow and diversify our economy, we should remember that it took many hands from various cultures to build

this province. It's the most ethnically diverse province in Canada. It's B.C.'s multicultural society that gives us a competitive advantage and an important bridge across the Pacific.

Today British Columbia and Canada are proof that people from different cultures and traditions can build vibrant and thriving communities and sustain our economy in times of economic uncertainty.

Our government's Speech from the Throne is a vision for our beautiful province that can be achieved by working together and across party lines. What British Columbians want is stability. Our government has a plan to work with all parties to improve the lives of people across B.C.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of the Speech from the Throne without any amendment.

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

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

J. Darcy: It gives me great pleasure to introduce my Member of Parliament, Peter Julian, for New Westminster–Burnaby, who has served our community at the federal level for — how many years now? — 13 years and is a strong supporter for MLAs in this House from Burnaby and New Westminster.

[1510]

I would ask all members of this House to give him a really warm welcome.

L. Throness: I, too, seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

L. Throness: I would like to welcome to the House today four people: Corisa Bell, who is a councillor in the city of Maple Ridge; Rob Vagramov, who is also a councillor but in the city of Port Moody; and also some people closer to home. Sam Waddington is a councillor in the city of Chilliwack, and he operates Mount Waddington's Outdoors, which is a store that caters to people who are getting far more exercise than me. I'd like to welcome Jason Lum. He's the chair of the Fraser Valley regional district, and he's also the president of the Lower Mainland Local Government Association. He's a councillor in the city of Chilliwack, and he also sits on the UBCM executive.

Would the House please welcome my friends.

Debate Continued

L. Throness: Now it's a pleasure to speak to the amendment on the Speech from the Throne.

First of all, I would like to thank a number of people who have helped me in various ways. First, I want to pay tribute, given that this is my first speech in the House after the election, to my constituents for electing me. It is a position of great honour and great responsibility, and it's a privilege to be here.

I want them to know that I want to serve them in the best way I can. I used to have an office in Hope, when Hope was in my riding, but I have decided now to open a satellite office in Agassiz. It's on Pioneer Avenue, and we're going to have a grand opening in that office on July 1 — that's on Canada Day — at two o'clock, for an hour. We're going to have some cake together and celebrate the opening of our office, which will serve constituents in Agassiz and Harrison Mills and the village of Harrison Hot Springs. So thanks to my constituents.

I want to thank those who work for me. I think of Dagmar Lucak. I think of Sheila Denis and Kathy Miki, who take care of me in the office and who take very good care of my constituents. They pour heart and soul into helping constituents in my riding, especially those who are most needy. I could not operate my office without them, and I want to thank them for their faithfulness and their hard work.

It's after an election, so I have to thank my volunteers. There were, I counted, about 250 people who were involved in small ways or in large ways in my campaign. I can't, of course, thank them all. I want to especially thank Susan Mathies, my campaign manager. I had a campaign leadership team, a large team, who did an incredible job. In the end, we had so many people who were involved. Who knows? We may need to call on them again soon, so I want to make sure to thank them.

I want to thank family as well. I have three brothers and one sister, and their spouses. I have 13 nieces and nephews. Of course, I can't name them all today. But at the beginning of the campaign, we had a little family gathering. They brought me a number of frozen meals that they had prepared, home cooked, so that I could concentrate on the election rather than on cooking. I so much appreciate that very practical expression of love and the many others that they give to me as well.

It's a special privilege to respond to the amendment from the Speech from the Throne just before a historic vote is taken in this House. I want to speak today from the perspective of a lifelong, small-c conservative. I spent 12 years in Ottawa working for the Reform Party federally, and also the Conservatives. I've always opposed the NDP both federally and provincially. I've always supported smaller government in the coalition that we call the B.C. Liberal Party.

I want to say from the outset that I'll be supporting this government and the Speech from the Throne and, therefore, speaking in opposition, of course, to the amendment before us today. But this is an unusual Speech from the Throne. I want to explain to my constituents why I'm

going to be voting for it. But first, I want to pay tribute to two very important people, and that is the Premier and the Minister of Finance.

As the fiscal update showed yesterday, they have done a stellar job of managing B.C.'s public finances over the past five years. No one — no one, Mr. Speaker — can gainsay what they have achieved, not even in the opposition. I would say that the opposition ought to be thanking the Premier and the Minister of Finance on bended knee for leaving them with a fantastic set of books that has no parallel in this nation. No other government in Canada has done so good a job.

We are alone at the head of the pack of economies across Canada. It's because of the discipline and the sound judgment that the Minister of Finance and the Premier have shown that we are able to deliver a throne speech as we have. All of us in this House owe a debt of gratitude to them. They are national leaders on the economy.

[1515]

We find ourselves in an extraordinary situation today. My constituents often approach me about it. They're not angry about it. They're intrigued. They're curious. They're wondering. They're remarking about how interesting the situation is. I think they instinctively realized that it wasn't brought about by the intention of either party. In fact, it was far from the intention of either major party in this House that the situation be where it is today. It was a major disappointment to both parties. No, this situation was created by the people of B.C., none of whom intended that it would end up in this way either.

Our situation today is the unconscious result of nearly two million people casting a ballot. Let me describe to you just how close this election was, Mr. Speaker. There were 1.985 million votes cast in the election, and the two main parties were separated by just 1,666 votes. That is astonishingly close. Let me illustrate just how close that is. If there were only 1,200 votes cast in the province, the difference between the two major parties would have just been one vote. That is as close as you can get. This close race was inevitably mirrored in several constituencies by the slimmest of margins — in the one, as few as 87. I think we fell short of a majority by just 189 heartbreaking votes in the riding of Courtenay-Comox.

This extraordinary election result requires an extraordinary response. So we have an extraordinary throne speech before us which differed from our platform in a variety of ways, which is very unusual. It borrowed about 30 elements from the platforms of the other two parties. They were chosen for our throne speech as we have done our level best to forge a consensus in this House, leading to stable government. But it appears that the opposition prefers an unstable arrangement.

In fact, I will never understand why the Green Party would side with the opposition instead of the government — after all their talk about a desire for stable government,

that they would choose an option that does not provide stable government — that provides an effective tie in this House. Supporting us on this side of the House — we could have found many ways to work together — would have led to a stable majority for four good years of stable government where we could accomplish a lot together.

The most substantial reason I can think of is that we are seeing the true colour of the Green Party, and that colour is orange. I will be reminding my constituents in the next election, whenever that is, that they have clearly sided with the NDP. They have clearly sided with those who are contrary to free enterprise in this province.

We on this side have proposed some broad policy changes because we want to remain in government, and why would we not attempt to do so? I have been astounded at the press and the opposition and others who charge that we're trying to hold onto government as if that's something unethical. Well, I would say: "Guilty as charged." That is, after all, the object of every political party in this House, including those opposite.

Although I think it looks kind of grasping and unseemly for the opposition to be demanding every day a confidence vote ahead of the orderly transitional process, which had been announced long ago for today following customary debate in this House — in which the opposition is not taking part, and I think it's very sad they're not doing so — I fully respect their right to grasp for the brass ring.

Our democratic system is an adversarial system. We've been mandated, here on the B.C. Liberal side, by 43 ridings in the province and 797,000 voters to continue our great economic program and oppose the NDP. Of course, we're going to continue to do both of those things as long as we can.

To the press, it's as if we're doing something wrong by not rolling over and giving up and helping the NDP become government, although they're not, of course, suggesting the opposite — that the NDP would do the same thing for the B.C. Liberals — even though there would be better grounds for doing so, since the B.C. Liberals actually won the most seats in the House and the most votes in the election. But we aren't asking for fairness from the media. We don't expect that.

In fact, we don't want the reins of government for their own sake; we want them because there's so much at stake in this province. Let me list just a few of the things that are at stake. We could talk about Site C and the thousands of jobs and the massive benefits it will provide for the next century, as well as the massive cost, about \$630 million, to stop it. We want it to go ahead. Just as the W.A.C. Bennett dam was an amazingly good deal for this province, so will Site C deliver good for the taxpayers of this province and their children and their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren. For 100 years, it will provide benefits for the taxpayers of this province.

I have never, by the way, heard the Green Party criticize the W.A.C. Bennett dam. Then why would they criticize the Site C dam, which is all clean electricity? I want to quote what the hon. leader of the Green Party said when he supported Site C just a few years ago. Here's what he said: "I cannot see what is stopping Site C. There are environmental consequences, yes, but there are environmental consequences for everything we do." He said that in a *Globe and Mail* interview on January 31 of 2009.

That, of course, was before he entered politics in 2015 and saw a good opportunity to make political hay at the expense of Site C, at the expense of thousands of jobs and a secure supply of clean and green electricity for our province for 100 years. All that can go in the trash can so that he can score cheap political points. I find that absolutely stunning, and I will be sure to remind my constituents of that during the next election. To me, it's a question of trust.

I want to continue to digress for a moment to talk about what the Green Party voted for in the House — or voted against in the House — earlier this week. Their leader opposed party status for his own party in the House this week because the leader of the NDP put his thumb on the idea. Even though, a few days ago, the Green Party leader publicly said that he would vote right away for good policies like campaign financing legislation, he couldn't bring himself to vote for his own party. He couldn't even bring himself to look at his own legislation.

In fact, I was in my seat here on that day, and I witnessed a conversation between him and our House Leader. When our House Leader told him the contents of the bill that was being introduced by the government that would give the Green Party official party status, what was the leader of the Green Party's response? I heard it myself. "I'll go talk to John," he said. He hadn't decided independently what to do. He had to run across the way and ask permission of his political boss. When told that his party could not be recognized as a party, he obediently trotted back to stand and vote against his own party, against his own MLAs, against his own party members around the province and against his own interest.

Given the capitulation of the Greens in this House on this basic issue that defines their own existence as a party in this place, I wonder if they will have the stomach ever to stand up to the Leader of the Opposition when he, for example, decides to remove the secret ballot for union membership, to take away the fundamental rights of workers to decide union membership for themselves in secret. I wonder if the Green Party won't cave on that one too. That, too, is a question of trust.

Allow me to continue. What else is at stake in this transfer of government that may happen at 5:30? The entire LNG industry, which has already begun in Squamish, is an industry that was scratched out of the bare ground in just four years by the Premier and the former Minister Responsible for Natural Gas Development. It's an indus-

try with the potential for dozens of billions of dollars in new investment, thousands of jobs for a generation and billions in income to support the social programs we all value. LNG would even replace coal in China. It would do the whole world a green favour by reducing pollution.

Will any proponent make a final investment decision with the NDP and Greens in power? I highly doubt it. This growing industry is going to wither and die on the vine, thanks to the NDP-Green coalition against LNG. We can only hope that they don't get to take government.

What about the Trans Mountain pipeline and all the monetary and other benefits that go along with it for the next 20 years? Will it ever happen under the NDP and Greens together? What about the replacement of the Massey Tunnel under this regime? And on and on it goes. We could continue.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, a change in government will imperil our sterling record of low taxes and balanced budgets and triple-A credit ratings and declining burden of debt and job creation and record growth in exports.

We've tried to preserve a consensus for the benefit of jobs and economic development and major projects, prosperity for families in B.C. That is the reason that we want to keep on governing. British Columbians have a lot to lose.

Now, I want to talk for a moment about the message of this election. I spent 12 years in Ottawa working for politicians there, and I always admired the House of Commons, because I saw mirrored in the House of Commons what was really going on in the country.

[1525]

Now in B.C., I see here too that the composition of the Legislature really does mirror the thoughts of the electorate with great accuracy. It's up to politicians to assess the results and say: "What are the voters saying to us?" Because they're always sending a message to us through their vote, and we always have to be conscious that they're the boss. We, the politicians, are the servants. It's not about the will of politicians. It's not about the will of political parties. It's about the will of the people, what the people of B.C. want. And it's the job of politicians to discern the message the people are sending, because if we get the message wrong, the electorate will find someone else to do their will.

What message were the people of B.C. sending in this election? Well, the biggest surprise to me was that the NDP received almost as many votes on a provincewide basis as did the B.C. Liberals, and these were concentrated in urban areas. It used to be the other way around, where B.C. Liberals appealed more to urbanites.

Elsewhere in Canada, I would point out that there has been a similar shift. I think of the situation in Alberta, where the NDP won a provincial election, having never before been a contender on that political stage. I think of the federal Liberals, who've moved to the left and

crowded out the federal NDP, who, in turn, put pressure on the federal Green Party. I think the same of the Ontario Liberals. I think of our American neighbours under President Obama, who moved left for eight long and, in my opinion, sad years.

Along with the growth of cities, there's been a cultural shift in favour of more social programs. I think perhaps there are more interactions between people, so people are more concerned about transit. They're more concerned about crime. They're more concerned about housing, the price of housing and things like that, because of the growth of cities. And we in the B.C. Liberal Party need to recognize that.

Obviously, we did a lot of things right, because we received the most votes and the most seats in the chamber, including hundreds of thousands of votes in urban areas. Voters were telling us that they generally liked our program. We've done a fantastic job on the economy, and they were acknowledging that. We were to be rewarded and encouraged, particularly in rural B.C. We were told that voters were pleased with the government over the past four years.

But the fact that a number of NDP members instead of B.C. Liberal members returned in some new urban areas was, I think, a warning to our party. Voters were telling us, even by the slimmest of margins, that we didn't get it quite right in the election, and we have to face this reality. And I, as a small-c conservative, and others like me need to face it as well. We have to see this trend, not only in urban B.C. but elsewhere in Canada.

So it seems to me that our party platform could have spoken more strongly to the concerns of urban voters. Our Premier has wisely acknowledged this and confronted this reality and shifted course slightly in order to meet that challenge. But I would point out on the other side that in the election this spring, the NDP were dealt a massive rebuke by voters, particularly in rural B.C., about their concern for balanced budgets and jobs and economic development, and that's why they lost the election.

While we on this side have been working ever since the election to satisfy urban voters that we heard their message loud and clear, there's been no change, no course correction whatsoever, for the NDP, even in the face of a razor-thin election that resulted in a defeat for them.

[G. Kylo in the chair.]

You would think that after losing every election since 2001, five elections in a row, the NDP would have gotten the idea that they need to be more business-friendly, more concerned about the economy. They're jubilant and triumphant today. They think they've won something. But this is, in part, an illusion. I mean, I will congratulate them. They might win tonight by a vote or two, but this victory for them is an illusion. They actually lost the election seven weeks ago, and they don't quite realize it.

They have to depend on a third party to prop them up. But in this ideological, hard-left party — just look at their constitution — where a member still quotes Karl Marx in this House.... After losing five elections, there is no thought that they need to change course on the economy. Maybe it's because they are really, at the core, against free enterprise, and this refusal to acknowledge reality is why I believe they will keep losing elections again in the future.

I only mention this not because I want them to win but because I want British Columbians to win. So I want whatever government is here to acknowledge the economy and the importance of the economy and do what it takes to make our economy grow and prosper so the people of B.C. can grow and prosper along with them.

[1530]

Here I want to talk for a moment about political principle. Because of the content of the throne speech, we've heard some commentary in the news about principle, about us on the B.C. Liberal side upholding principles or not upholding them. But they should not forget, nor can we ever afford to forget, the greatest principle of democracy. The greatest principle is that we do what the people of B.C. want us to do. Anything less would be utterly cynical. Political parties need to change, along with the people who elect them.

Thus we have the throne speech before us, which borrowed items from the platforms of the other parties. It would cause me discomfort to borrow any of them. But I wanted to put the matter in context, so I went over the NDP platform in detail. I made a spreadsheet, and I enumerated all of the promises that were made in the NDP platform. I counted about 280 promises — large ones, small ones. About 170 of those promises, or 60 per cent of them, required significant new spending.

In the throne speech, our government adopted just a few dozen ideas from both platforms, the platforms of both the Green and the NDP parties. Aside from election financing, which was a more dramatic change, we expanded social policy initiatives that we are already undertaking. In other words, our throne speech is not a different kind of policy; it is only different in degree.

Let me enumerate, for example, a few promises made by the NDP that we did not adopt. We did not promise to freeze ICBC and hydro rates. We did not promise to give every renter in B.C. a \$400 grant every year or build 114,000 new affordable housing units at a cost of over \$20 billion. We did not promise to hurt small businesses and inexperienced workers by raising the minimum wage to \$15. We did not promise to raise corporate and income tax rates. All of these items of the NDP platform, and many more — 250 of them — we laid aside.

So what did we promise? Allow me to go through a number of them. Changes to our political donations is a big change. There has been no change, by the way, since B.C. joined Confederation in 1871. Well, we think this

was part of the voters' message to us, so we've agreed to it, but this is not an ideological issue. We've been true to our ideals. In the legislation we proposed, which the NDP refused to look at, we proposed that the government would not be footing the bill for political parties. This is fundamentally different than the NDP vision, which would have the government paying for all political parties. We don't think we should do that. We think that parties should have to appeal to the electorate, so that we raise our money from those who support us.

We promised a referendum on electoral reform. We did not promise proportional representation, as they want across the way. We said that the people of B.C. will decide that question, and we will provide a path to that decision point. I have no problem with that. We promised not to change the labour code — particularly not, in my view, the part about taking away the secret ballot for union membership. No conservative could oppose that in the throne speech.

We promised new child care spaces, which is more of what we are already doing. In the campaign, we promised 13,000 spaces, and I heard no opposition to it from my own riding, from my own voters. We're now expanding that by 60,000 more. This is not a question of ideology, but it's a question of affordability. We promised more in social assistance, which added to what we did for the disabled over the past two years. I have no issue with that. In fact, I've publicly said before that I support more money for welfare, as soon as we could afford it. No one in the riding criticized me for that. That's because it's not about ideology; it's about affordability.

I especially appreciate the new language in the throne speech about recovery from addiction. I've been publicly beating this drum for the past four years, and that change is very welcome. We need to go beyond saving people's lives. We need to save people's lives, yes, but we need to go farther than that. We need to help them break free from addiction.

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Members.

L. Throness: I fully support a ministry of state being created to push this along, because I support recovery from addiction and freedom from addiction. I think our society may finally be waking up to the fact that freedom from addiction is more than harm reduction. Freedom from addiction is harm elimination, and we should go for it in a big way. Every conservative could agree with this.

We're continuing in the throne speech with promises we already made in the platform a few weeks ago, such as more residential care beds for seniors and cutting the MSP in half. That was acceptable to our supporters. We've added, in this throne speech, a royal commission on education. I would say it's about time. It's been 30 years since

the last royal commission. There are many questions we could answer through a royal commission.

[1535]

Let's talk about rapid transit for a moment. We've always funded rapid transit. We've been at the forefront of that, and we're simply going to do more of that. I especially appreciate the promise to study the feasibility of rapid transit to Chilliwack. Many of my constituents who are sick and tired of sitting on the No. 1 freeway will vote for that. Here the media exaggerates, as if we'd promised to build a new SkyTrain out to Chilliwack and up to Squamish tomorrow. We have simply promised to study the feasibility of a number of rapid transit alternatives, and I will advocate for that to start right away.

We're going to introduce ride-sharing. We already promised that.

We'll accelerate the timetable of the Pattullo Bridge replacement. That's something that thousands of commuters will support. This is not ideological; this is affordable.

The removal of tolls on the Port Mann Bridge is a big promise, but this is clearly what the voters of Surrey were concerned about, and we heard that message. Removal of tolls is essentially the paydown of debt on a provincial asset. Again, it's not a question of ideology but of affordability.

I want to point to the wording of the throne speech which promises to eliminate those tolls as quickly as possible. As a small-c conservative, I think the balancing of the budget and the promise to balance the budget needs to take priority over other promises should they conflict.

Another promise. We're going to fully fund adult basic education and ESL programs. That promise was lifted directly out of the NDP platform, but I don't have a problem with that, because you can make a good argument that you can integrate new Canadians more quickly into our economy by helping them more rapidly acquire language and other skills.

It's just a shame that through this attempt to gain consensus in the House, we did not gain the support of the other parties.

Regarding housing affordability, we would proceed in a vastly different way than the NDP. Instead of building 114,000 rental units that the government will own and ultimately pay for at a handsome price, we're going to work with the private sector to build 50,000 more units of new housing across the province over ten years that will go into a new rent-to-own home program. I think that's a great idea. It'll get 50,000 more families into homeownership without costing government an arm and a leg.

More money for parks and conservation officers is a welcome promise in the throne speech. I've privately lobbied the government for more conservation officers, because my constituents have lobbied me for them. We have all sorts of problems in the Chilliwack River Valley with garbage and noise and shooting and other things like that. We need more conservation officers, and the

government has seen that. So I'm happy to see the government respond in this way.

When it comes to carbon taxes, I'm not a big fan, because I think rapid technological change will cause the market to reduce carbon anyway, without government interference. But even the annual increase in the throne speech will be mitigated by two policies. The provincial sales tax will be reduced dollar for dollar by the amount raised from carbon tax increases, and it will continue to be a revenue-neutral tax.

Some energy-intensive industries will be exempted. I would point out greenhouses, many of which are in my riding and are already getting a carbon tax rebate. I would expect this to continue, and I would argue that other parts of agriculture as well, more broadly, be considered an energy-intensive industry.

After going over all the items, as a good coalition partner, I have to take some water with my wine, and I'm okay with that. If we need to fund more social programs more comprehensively, to a greater degree, in order to satisfy urban voters that we have heard them, I can support that.

Interjection.

Deputy Speaker: Oak Bay–Gordon Head.

L. Throness: It all comes down, then, not to ideology, but to affordability: can we afford these measures? Yesterday the government released a fiscal update which shows that our economy grew at a terrific rate, of 3.7 per cent in 2016, and may grow even faster this year. That's amazing.

I would expect at a change of government that there would be a chill, a pall cast over our economy, just like it almost did in 2013. But we had a surplus of \$2.8 billion at the end of the fiscal year alone. Our taxpayer-supported debt fell by \$1 billion. Our operating debt is set to be gone altogether by 2020. And our debt-to-GDP ratio, our debt burden, was 15.9 per cent, which is one of the lowest in Canada. By comparison, the debt-to-GDP ratio in America is 105 per cent. It's staggering.

The throne speech commitments amount to \$2.6 billion over three years, so yes, we can absolutely afford the throne speech, with money to spare. We've not changed our bottom-line principles one iota in the throne speech.

B.C. Liberals will continue to stand on bedrock of balanced budgets, low taxes, less red tape for business, a reducing burden of public debt, and job creation and economic development. The Speech from the Throne threatens none of these things. We are the only party in this House that businesses, small and large, can trust to pull for them, that workers can trust to support them with job creation, that needy people can trust to develop our economy in support of the social programs they need.

[1540]

So I will enter the next election with my head held high. I will take on all comers. I'll call to account those who would stifle economic development in this province. I will reject the negativity of the press and other parties. I will defend the work of our Premier and Minister of Finance and their stellar economic record. I will protect the principles of free enterprise, job creation and economic growth, and I will support the Speech from the Throne.

S. Gibson: What a pleasure it is to rise in my place today and represent my constituents of the beautiful Abbotsford-Mission riding. I'm going to be speaking against the amendment. And like my colleagues here, we're going to be speaking in favour of the Speech from the Throne.

One of the beautiful things about my area is all of the agriculture and the beauty of the area. Many of you have driven through, and you've seen Sumas Mountain, a beautiful area, one of the last really rural areas south of the freeway east of Vancouver. Hatzic. Deroche. Dewdney. All these beautiful little communities. It's a pleasure, an honour, for me to represent them here today.

I want to thank my wife, Joy, for her support, having just completed a four-year term here, and my two daughters, Shari-Anne and Alisa, my son-in-law Jeremy and my three little grandsons, six, four and two years old. They're going to be moving very soon, finally, into their own home. Some of you know how tough that is. They've been in an apartment for quite a while. They have to go in the hallway to change their mind. So now, they're moving into a home. It's a good thing to report on that.

I also want to acknowledge all the folks that allowed me to come here and represent them. I had a wonderful team. Brian Gaudet was my campaign manager. Colin Reimer. Don Stahl. Abe Neufeld. Rick Zacharias. Dave Naples. So many people knocking on doors for me, building signs. What a privilege and honour it was to have these folks behind me. I just count it a privilege to be able to represent them as well here.

In my office, I have CAs Jean Hooge and Joyce Hill. They do amazing work representing me when all the constituents come by with their issues. All of you, on both sides of the House, know how important your CAs are. They do a great job. I often hear them working with constituents on files, and it's outstanding.

I've had the privilege of teaching at two universities over many years. And as some of you know, I served on Abbotsford council and a precursor council, Matsqui council — some of you might remember Matsqui — for over three decades. One of the things you notice.... Many of us come out of a local government background. We notice a difference, really, between local government and provincial. They both have their strengths and weaknesses. I've found it to be a real pleasure to take that local government paradigm and apply it here whenever possible.

I want to note, too, that I used to be the owner of a small business, a plastic fabricating company. We had 13 employees. I often think that it's a real asset for an MLA to have to meet a payroll. You really get to understand some of the challenges that face small business today.

We know, those of us that now get paid regularly as MLAs and those people that work in government or for a business, that that paycheque is pretty regular. But when you have a small business, you make your own paycheque. There have been times.... I look back on the small business that I had the privilege of owning with a partner and some of the challenges we had meeting all our responsibilities — payroll and taxes and that — but it was a good experience. I'm thankful for that.

I want to acknowledge somebody that was special to me. He passed away just recently. Everybody here will probably know the name George Ferguson. George Ferguson was a long-standing mayor, probably one of the longest-serving mayors in our province and our country's history. It was a privilege for me to serve with George on Abbotsford council. As you will know, he just passed away here quite recently. He left behind a lot of kids and his loving wife Ria. The reason I mention George today is because he kind of represents what I believe we stand for on this side of the House.

[1545]

George was a fierce free-enterpriser. He was loyal to the community. He had the privilege of serving as president of the FCM and UBCM. But his grassroots values, his agrarian values as a hard worker, are really what we typify on this side of the House — a strong work ethic and committed to rural values. For those of us that had the privilege of attending his funeral, acknowledging his spiritual values at the end as well — I think we were pretty moved by that. Some of you know that his daughter went on to politics and served briefly as the mayor of White Rock.

Some of the programs that I appreciate.... I want to emphasize my riding a little more. I want to acknowledge the excellent presentation by the previous speaker here, my colleague, speaking about some of the more panoramic issues facing our province. I'm going to stress a little more my own riding of Abbotsford-Mission.

Some of you will know that the berry industry is very strong. Part of the program that we've been announcing is a permanent Grow Local program. All of the dairy farmers, the blueberry farmers, raspberries and strawberries — the Grow Local program is a key component of that. I've appreciated the Minister of Agriculture working on that.

Additional land set aside for agriculture — 91,000 hectares of land by 2020. We're committed to the protection of farmland. If you go through the Fraser Valley, you'll see the majesty of farming — the Okanagan, Vancouver Island, all over. Agriculture is growing, and it's an important part of our province. I'm very proud of that.

We have a lot of agribusinesses in my riding. Some of you city people — when you get kind of restless with the grey pavement around and you think, “What can I do today?” come out to my riding, and we’ll show you around. Warkentin Organic Farm, Howie Wong, Rockweld, Lepp — these folks are doing really well, contributing to the economy of our province in agriculture. This Speech from the Throne enhances that and encourages that.

We’re promoting great fresh produce and healthier children. It was mentioned earlier that we have the healthiest people in Canada, the lowest smoking rate. Some of the key indicators — we’re right at the top in terms of health indicators. Be thankful. This government is committed to continuing that. I know that both sides of the House, I’m sure, are in favour of that.

We’re supporting our farmers. Part of the success of safeguarding B.C. farmland is mitigating damage to the farmland. It was my privilege as the MLA for the Abbotsford-Mission riding to announce a \$10.5 million investment in diking and drainage and pump upgrades for the Fraser Valley regional district’s Nicomen Island dike system. This is on the north side of the river, a few kilometres east of Mission.

It’s a big investment by our government and a real commitment to them — \$6 million of which will be used to widen dikes, increase their stability, working very closely with the local First Nations and protecting farmland. The balance of the funds will be put towards pump infrastructure upgrades. In the event of a flood, we’ll have a reliable system to be able to respond effectively.

I was also successful and very pleased to be able to announce \$10 million for diking and draining on the Matsqui side. If you’ve ever seen those pictures of the flooded river in 1948 — I think we’ve probably all seen those pictures — those were taken in my riding. That’s the most troubling area in many ways along the Fraser River. I was able to announce \$10 million to work with our First Nations and the city to develop more infrastructure to protect those dikes. If we ever lost the dikes along there, it would be a catastrophe indeed. There’s a large sewer plant, a major road and a water distribution system.

It’s only because we have a strong economy, which is being encouraged and nurtured on this side of the House, that we can do these incredibly exciting initiatives. We continue to realize that there sometimes can be a gap between the aspirations of our rural constituents and those in our urban areas. That’s why we have a renewed plan to acknowledge that and work more closely with urban folks to ensure that the infrastructure and the kinds of services that they are seeking balance out with those of our rural areas.

[1550]

Record investments in health care, education, infrastructure — enhancing programs that British Columbians wish to see. Building a key infrastructure will allow us to build out the economy yet do it in a way that is environ-

mentally sensitive and also does not effect the aesthetics of our province.

There are some issues that have come forward that are, you might say, controversial to the extent that people have been promoting them. One of the things about our government is that we’re listeners. We’re listeners.

I’ve heard, sometimes, the criticism.... People say: “Well, you’ve adopted some of the ideas or themes of other parties.” Well, we’re listening. When we were out on the hustings, we heard some concerns expressed to us and so adjusted those. As has been noted, those have been incorporated into the Speech from the Throne.

I would encourage colleagues across the aisle that this is your opportunity to speak to that, and maybe even.... For those in the Green Party, you still have the chance to turn this around. It’s not over. You can do it.

We’ll welcome you to.... The leader of the Green Party said earlier he’d like to see more working together. I think this is his chance. So we’re looking forward to your vote later on.

We’re going to be starting with a ban on corporate, big labour union and third-party donations. It’s going to remove big money and external influence from our politics, along with a ban on donations from B.C. federal parties as well. With this reform, we’re going to end the perception that democracy in B.C. can be bought and paid for.

Our electoral system has been heavily scrutinized by our time in government. The discussion about electoral reform will allow us to open up that dialogue, and it’s been a source of discussion around the province. Our government is addressing that. It’s something we make a top priority.

We are also looking at electoral reform. Electoral reform, I know, is something that is of particular interest to our friends in the third party — unnamed third party.

We’re going to develop another referendum and develop a clear question, which reflects the needs of British Columbia, but protecting key populations and ensuring that rural areas are treated fairly here in the assembly is always the challenge. You’ll notice that the population counts in rural or urban areas like my own — suburban kinds of areas, or semi-rural areas.... There’s kind of a contrast there.

A successful government must always have clear and defined goals, and they have to be reflected in the democratic will of the people.

Now, I’m a parent of two daughters and a grandparent of three, and I understand the importance of the accessibility of child care in my area — Mission and Abbotsford — and around the province. There’s that balance we need to achieve with fiscal means available, but also striking the opportunities for those folks that need that.

With that in mind, the B.C. government will amend the 2017 budget to make a \$1 billion investment in child care and early childhood education — with the confidence of this House, when we vote later on, on the Speech

from the Throne. That's over the next four years. This is the largest single increase in our province's history.

This vital investment will follow the principles we maintain — follow the principles and our values — but at the same time, delivering a high quality of care, hopefully shortening wait-lists and doing it affordably.

Our investment will enable the creation of 73,000 new child care spaces — 60,000 beyond those promised in our most recent platform. We're going to provide fully subsidized care for those families earning up to \$60,000 and partially subsidized care for those in families up to \$100,000. I think the response has been very good to this. It provides an excellent opportunity for the child care that we need in our province. On this side of house, we're listening, and government knows this is important that we implement that.

We're also looking at child care spaces in elementary schools — coordinating with the schools. Some of you know that issue now in my riding is kind of an issue, with child care on school properties, so it will be addressing that.

We also want to fully implement Grand Chief Ed John's recommendations on indigenous child welfare to ensure that we are providing the best services possible. That's something that we are implementing. I know that our public is happy with that.

[1555]

We're hiring teachers right now. You probably know about that. Education is a vital component of our government's legacy. The hirings we're doing are being very well received provincially.

My wife, Joy, was a public school teacher for her entire career. I taught at a public university for 13 years, and I also taught at the JI, so I'm a big supporter of public education.

We have many options available in our province — public education, independent schools, home-schooling — but this is something we're really committed to. This will provide in many districts — probably all districts, frankly — the kind of level of teaching and also teaching assistants that we need to ensure quality education.

Finally... I see the time is rapidly approaching. I know the next speaker will be speaking shortly, our colleague here. I want to just comment a bit on the royal commission on education, the first in three decades, with the sole purpose of finding the best ways to improve and shape our education system. I want to just speak to this and say that a royal commission could really get into some of the issues that we find important in education in our province. I think this will be very useful.

I want to say as well that I look back at my education... I still remember a few of my favourite teachers when I was in elementary school. You know what? I often wonder what would have happened to me if I didn't have the nurturing and good support of teachers. When I go out in the mall with my wife, people come up, older people

now who have kids of their own. They'll say, "I remember you when you taught me 20 years ago," to my wife.

Being a teacher is an incredible position. I have university students I taught many years ago come up to me and say, "I remember you taught me marketing 100," or whatever the course I taught. So I value education. I know we do on both sides of the House.

This royal commission is an excellent initiative. I'm proud to support it. I'm proud to support the Speech from the Throne, and I'm very opposed to this amendment.

Hon. R. Coleman: It may come as a shock to the House that I oppose the amendment to the Speech from the Throne, but what would you expect?

I'm very pleased to get the opportunity to speak this afternoon. Usually, after every election, you do get an opportunity to come into this House and thank people that have done things for you. When you've done it for 21 years and six campaigns, you actually see your volunteers go from the age of 50 to the age of 70 or the age of 60 to the age of 80. Some of them have been there with me for 21 years.

I don't often get many people visiting here, but I really do want to thank my family. My son was, I think, 15 years old when I started this job. He's now been to Afghanistan, served this country, is a businessman in Langley. I'm very proud of him, and of course, he and his wife, my daughter-in-law, have brought us two grandchildren. That's kind of special for both of us. My daughter and son-in-law, who are both teachers, also have given me two grandchildren. They've given me the one girl grandchild who actually owns granddad. Anything she wants she can probably get from me by just batting her eyes and giving me a smile, and I'm toast.

One thing, when you have an opportunity to serve on either side of this House, you do is you meet a lot of young people who come to work for government, whether it be in a minister's office or in a caucus, on either side of the House — because I've been on both sides, in opposition and in government. You have people, some of them... One particular person on my staff has been with me for 20 years, from opposition all the way through to the chief of staff in my ministry. Others have come and gone who we've mentored. We've seen them grow individually and personally.

I always have looked at these young people, as they've come along, as sort of my extended family. Every year we bring them all back, no matter where they are, for a dinner at Christmas time. We all get together — it grows in numbers as they come with their boyfriends or girlfriends or spouses — and just sort of talk about where they are, how they're doing in their lives and things like that.

But sometimes you have periods of time that you look at and say, "Boy, that wasn't so good," and it focuses you back on what's important in life. My extended team of people — my friends, the people that work for me —

two weeks ago went through a pretty tough week. We had a father, a stepfather, a husband and a mother die in seven days.

[1600]

The love that came from all the people reminded me of just how connected these people that have worked in this building together are and how much they care about each other. I don't think we should ever forget the humanity of life in this business. If you want to have a quick-hit thought about this, see the pain, the suffering, the loss, the continued grieving that goes on that needs to have people's arms wrapped around them.... When you lose four people that are close to people you love in a week, it actually reminds you why you're here and what's important.

I'm very lucky. I've been married for 43 years in August. I have my children, I have my health, and I have my family. I also have a terrific community that I represent in Langley, which I've had the honour of representing for 21 years — boundary changes from time to time, but basically in the same area.

In that community, I've got people who have been with me and supported me for a long time. The one guy I think the most of is Larry Willoughby, who's my sign guy. Now, Larry told me in April: "This is the last one. I'm 70." Nobody makes a better jig for 4-by-4 signs than Larry. I cut my teeth back in the early 1980s as a sign guy, so I really do like the sign guys on the crew. I think they're a very important, integral piece. Of course, after the last election, as people know, it's a little tight. So Larry phones me up. He says: "Well, if there's another one, I'm in. I'm not going to leave you yet." So Larry is hanging in there. Good for Larry.

The community I represent is diverse. It's intriguing. It's exciting. It's young. It has a growing school population in one area and a declining school population in another, so you actually see schools being changed. In one community there are less and some have to close, and in another area, we're actually going to build a new high school. That's basically because that's life and demographics.

As I go into my comments here today, I'm only going to talk about a few subjects. Obviously, if you gave me all the subjects, I could probably go for a couple of hours, and you're not going to let me do that, I don't think.

I want to talk about government, transition of government and the people that work in British Columbia. Now, if there's one thing I've learned in the 21 years I've been doing this, it's that British Columbia is gifted with an exceptional public service. The people that work in this public service in British Columbia and have led the ministries and have actually been the head of the public service and built the career development and stuff within.... The people that work here are exceptional. The people that work for us do an exceptional job, and some of them have actually been doing an exceptional job for all the time I've been here.

I was talking to the Member for Port Coquitlam earlier today. We were just chatting about some of the public service and the people and the changeovers that take place when governments come and go and people move on in their careers. I reminded him — we chuckled about this — that I've been gifted, having worked with the president and CEO of B.C. Housing for ten to 11 years, as the minister. But he was actually hired when the member for Port Coquitlam was a minister in 1996.

It's interesting how even some of the long-term employees who we get to know have gone cross-ministry, worked for us. I have a number of people like that who I quizzed when I was in opposition and who have since worked for me in various ministries.

The important part for me is just to recognize how they are. They have amazing leadership. They do an amazing job. They keep ministers on track. They bring innovative ideas to how things can be improved in this province, and then they go away, and they deliver. They deliver on behalf of all the taxpayers of British Columbia, not in a partisan way but in a way that's important to British Columbia.

If anything in British Columbia, we have a professional, non-partisan, exceptional public service who lead our ministries, whether they're at the director level, the ADM level, at the deputy minister level — exceptional people. Some will retire over the next few years, some will move on to other jobs, and some will still be here.

But there's one thing that they've done in this province in the 20 years plus I've been around here: they've built a foundation for all British Columbians. They should be congratulated for that.

[1605]

I also know that we have amazing leadership elsewhere in government. We have a number of Crown corporations, as you know — corporations like PavCo, B.C. Lotteries, the Liquor Distribution Branch, Hydro, ICBC and many, many more. I've had most of them at one time or another in the last decade and a half. I've always thought that they try hard, they work hard, and they should be honoured for the quality of work that they do, in spite of, sometimes, the criticism they get with regards to challenges that they have to meet.

Whether it's a bad year for insurance, because there are a lot more injury claims this year and the weather's been worse, for ICBC to try and manage; whether it's trying to do long-term forecasts for electricity and build a system around that while you have an aging infrastructure, 50- or 60-year-old dams that need to be refitted, redone and rebuilt, like the John Hart dam and the Ruskin dam out in the Fraser Valley; or whether you're going to innovate into a business that either could die or not be innovated like B.C. Lotteries; figure out how you can continue to deliver a commodity with public safety, thinking around it, like the Liquor Distribution Branch in British Columbia; or PavCo, who runs B.C. Place and, obviously, the trade and convention centre.

Interesting thing. If you get an opportunity, there is a program on the Knowledge Network. In an hour, you can watch the rebuilding of B.C. Place. Man, oh man. I think the ironworkers and the steelworkers and those folks are amazing. You watch this, and you see those guys up there on that cable, storeys in the air, walking across a little steel beam like that while they're tying in some massive truss that went onto that thing. You go.... Well, first of all, I wouldn't go up there. They walk along there like nothing.

But if you go and look at that program, you'll be just amazed at the workforce British Columbia has in all of our trades and all the exceptional people that build British Columbia. It really is something to see, and it's something to remember.

In this job, I've been inside almost every dam in British Columbia. I've been in mines, both underground and surface. I've been in a lot of mills, pulp mills, innovative things. Every time I get that opportunity, I'm amazed at the people out there, how they figure out how to build this stuff, how they can move the product down and chip it and do this and all the different things they do, whatever kind of mill it is. It's amazing.

I have a little company in my riding. It employs 100 people, and 50 of the additional jobs they have are because they're doing special little gauges for the Site C dam. You know, 50 people that nobody even knows about. They don't count them in the 20-some-hundred jobs up at Site C, but they're people in British Columbia. They've got apprentices and trades training going on, and they're just a vibrant group of people who are contributing significantly to British Columbia.

Now, in 2007-2008 and a bit of 2009, as a member of this government, I got a little bit of an education. Part of my education, ironically, was the member for Oak Bay-Gordon Head, who was involved in the climate action piece that was put together by our government to look at climate action. At that time, people would either call it global warming or climate action. They really hadn't settled on a term. So 168 meetings from everybody in all forms of industry. I sat in and listened and learned. I learned about climate change. I learned about the importance of trying to change behavior. I learned about a lot of things. As I also moved into the hydro portfolio with B.C. Hydro, I learned a lot about electricity.

I look back and think about those days, because I remember the member saying that the clean energy was hydroelectric. I still believe that today. I also remember one presenter saying that in actual fact there are two forms of clean energy, in his mind. One, he said, was hydroelectric — and nuclear. We don't do nuclear in British Columbia. We don't even do uranium mining in British Columbia because our people in B.C. believe that shouldn't be done here. So hydroelectric is our stable power of the future.

I also learned, as I came through that period of time, with regards to electricity, how important it is. I also

learned something that I remember as a kid. I remember it as a kid because I used to see it. I was born in Nelson, B.C. Every year we went and visited my Aunt Agnes and Uncle George and my cousins. We'd go down the road into Nelson. There are three dams there. We thought it was really cool when all the water was flushing down the runways of those dams. We just thought it was something else.

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I learned later that that really wasn't a good thing, because all you're doing is flushing electricity. You actually don't want those open all the time. You want to have the.... The electricity behind that dam is a giant battery that you can call on when you need it.

What a kid sees is a spectacular construction that took place way back in the days of W.A.C. Bennett. As an adult, you find out just how important those dams are to the entire grid for electricity in British Columbia.

British Columbia actually built its economy and its future on electricity. Rio Tinto Alcan had just spent \$4.7 billion to redo an aluminum plant in Kitimat. It wouldn't even be there if it wasn't for the electricity and the vision of W.A.C. Bennett. The fact of the matter is the product that makes the aluminum doesn't come from British Columbia. It's shipped here. It takes a lot of electricity to make aluminum. So they can get the affordable electricity to build the base of that.

Our pulp industry, our forest industry. Its growth over the decades is attributed to electricity.

Now, some people are critical of the Site C dam. I accept the fact they can be. I sit down with my constituents and talk to them quite a bit about this when they want to. I'm going to talk to you about Site C for a second. What we're going to hear going forward, in the climate action things that we all want to talk about, is that we want to increase the fleet of electric vehicles substantially over the next few decades. You have to take that in the context of how much electricity you've got to do that. While you're expanding that, you're going to have to do some other things.

In the northeast part of the province.... One of the initiatives with the federal government is to electrify the northeast sector where the oil and gas is done. It will reduce the GHG dramatically as part of Canada's action plan on climate and GHGs. But you can't do it without clean energy. You need Site C to shape for that power. Power in the future may go through an interconnect into Alberta so they can take plants off coal and actually clean up their environment at the same time.

As we do all this, we recognize we need other forms of power. We need to encourage solar, we need to encourage wind, and we have projects like that in B.C. We also would like to see if we could ever get to where we could really make geothermal work. It has been a difficult task globally to try and find a stable way to get geothermal to work efficiently.

There's one thing you have to know. If you build a wind farm — freshet, run of the river — or if you build a solar farm, what you need is.... When the sun is not shining or the water is not flowing or the wind is not blowing.... The guy down the street there can't afford to turn off his electricity. The hospital in your community can't afford to turn off their electricity because that's not producing power. If you can't shape that energy by having the battery of the water behind the dam, you cannot actually do as much as you should be able to do on cleaning up the environment with other forms of energy, particularly clean energy.

As we come through this, I think it's important to understand the benefits of this project. The Site C dam today employs over 2,200 people directly right at the site. In that 2,200 people, there are 188 people who are First Nations. They come from the Doig River First Nation, the Halfway River First Nation, the Blueberry River First Nations, the Saulneau First Nations, the McLeod Lake Indian Band, the West Moberly First Nations and the Fort Nelson First Nation — all communities all around that dam in the northeast part of the province who have jobs. There are a number of companies owned by First Nations that are actually running contracts and doing additional employment at Site C and taking that benefit back to their community.

If you really want to put it into focus for yourself, think about this. You're going to be able to shape power for the future of the cleaning of the environment with a clean energy project at Site C. You are going to be able to employ 10,000 people over the life of the project and impact about 30,000 jobs over the years to come because of all the ancillary benefits that will come with it.

What does it mean to Victoria? What does it mean to Nanaimo? What does it mean to Campbell River? How about Saanichton? Well, there are 22 families in Victoria who are employed at Site C. There are six in Sooke, there are 40 in Nanaimo, and there are 25 in Campbell River.

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All the communities up and down the Island have people working at Site C. Those wages come back into those communities and help support those families and their children in those communities. It should never be said it's only about the northeast.

If you want to go further, there are dozens of jobs in Vancouver. There are seven at Site C — not counting the guys that are making those little gauges at Site C — from Langley. There are people from Abbotsford, the Okanagan. Nelson's got two. Cranbrook's got a couple. All the way up into the interior of B.C., Quesnel. Prince George has got a lot — I think it's 58 or so — working at Site C. Full-time jobs for them to support their families, and it actually flows through to the rest of the economy in those communities.

So Site C is a British Columbian project. It's not a project that's only for the northeast part of this province. It's

an important project if we want to get to where we're going to have clean energy in the future and be able to continue our commitment to the climate. That project is.... I was involved in it at the very beginning as a minister, so obviously I have a bias, but now that I've seen the trickle-down benefits.... I stay in Saanichton when I'm in Victoria. There's a person in Saanichton that's working at Site C, just before the airport.

At the same time, though, when we talk about the throne speech and we talk about all the things we can do because of the economy and the things we can do for people, whether it be social assistance or what have you, we have to remember the benefits of these projects — for First Nations in the northeast, for the people that are working there and for the rest of British Columbia.

I listened carefully to the member for Saanich North and the Islands when he spoke earlier today. He talked about the importance of the ability for First Nations to have their self-determination for their future and economic opportunities. Well, I think what he should do when he gets the opportunity — I've talked to him about this — is go up to Prince Rupert.

Go to the Lax Kw'alaams village. Sit down with the mayor and council of Lax Kw'alaams. Sit down with the 200 young people in Prince Rupert who today are being trained for the future LNG industry. Go talk to the 150-plus in that community that are already working in the industry. Ask them how they went about getting their benefit agreements, and who negotiated it? You'll find out it was a government-to-government negotiation led by the Deputy Premier in direct communication with the chiefs and the leaders and elders of those communities.

I've been in their communities. I've heard the elders say that we need something for the future, for our kids, who are supporting their communities, signing benefit agreements, which they've done — long-term economic benefit agreements for those communities. It's not just the Lax Kw'alaams and the Metlakatla. If you went and saw the two leaders of those two communities and saw the passion they have for the changing of the outcomes in suicide, unemployment and health outcomes for their youth in the future of the villages, you would say: "Let's get this done."

It's really not just about moving the gas. It's actually changing the lives of people who don't have a great life today because of the levels of poverty they live in.

Go over and sit down with the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council. Seven First Nations. Same thing — direct negotiations between government and government. Everybody said: "You'll never get a deal done." You're right. We got the one deal done, and we're now on to the second and third to deal with forestry and other issues within it.

Go look at what happened in Prince Rupert with regards to the Pacific Northwest LNG project, where the First Nations on the environmental assessment are at the table in the environmental monitoring, where both levels

of government have the opportunity to stop that project any time they think that there's a difficulty with the environment. They're at the table. They're part of it. They're part of it because they want to be part of that economy, and it's a change for them and their communities and their long-term financial viability. It's important.

The gift of being a minister in dealing with those files and the many other ones I've got to know is I now have a number of friends. There are very good friends of mine that are First Nations, whether it be in the Musqueam, the Tsleil-Waututh, the Burrard or the Squamish, whether it be the Lax Kw'alaams, whether it be a small village up northwest of Prince George where the only way in is an hour-ish on gravel roads to a community that has a terrible suicide rate and their chief is saying: "You've got to get something done."

The way he put it is: "Look, we can't grow grapes and use tourism like they can down in Osoyoos. We don't have commercial property where we can build a mall or housing that people will come to."

[1620]

"We're nowhere. We're in the middle of nowhere. We have four families living in a single house. Building one new house is a big deal here. We need a change. We need an opportunity. We want to participate in it." And they do.

When we talk in the throne speech about economic development and when we talk about things like LNG and other projects, what we're really talking about is people. We're talking about the ability for people to have self-determination, success and pride in their lives, because that resource piece is so important to them. They all agree. Where there would be a natural gas pipeline going through a number of First Nations, they will monitor the environment and the construction with the companies when it comes through. They've agreed to the pipeline benefit agreements, and they're looking forward to the opportunity. They want to see this happen. So don't forget about folks like that.

The third thing I want to touch on, basically, because it was touched on in the throne speech, is mental health and addictions. When I was 19 years old, I was stationed in Brooks, Alberta. Actually, I was 20. I was 19 when I went to Canmore, so Brooks would have been 20. Life moves pretty fast. I went down to the Brooks Hotel, and I had to deal with somebody that was absolutely violent, crazy, out of their mind. As a kid from Penticton, I'd never seen anything like this before, right? It was a tough thing just to get him under control. He had actually been in a fight and busted up a bar. You get him in the car, and you try to figure out what is wrong with him. You'd go to a hospital, to emergency, and have him checked out.

Nobody knew anything about drugs. Nobody knew anything about these drugs that these people were taking then, which has evolved into things like crystal meth and all the other drugs that we deal with over life. It was a real eye-opener for me, the human change that the scourge

of drugs can have on people. It was also a change for me to know how difficult it is. Many people go through ten, 20 programs in order to get themselves clean and, hopefully, turn their lives around.

We have a project outside Prince George that we call Baldy Hughes. It's a therapeutic community up there. I've been up and sat in the room with five or six or ten of these people, talking about how they got into addictions, about their lives. One guy told me: "This is my 21st place, and this is the first time in 20 years I've been clean for a year and a half." He says: "You know, I actually met my son, sober, for the first time in a decade at Christmas." He says: "You've got to understand. It's our journey, and you can't design a cookie-cutter program for my addiction, because I've been through them all. Abstinence works for some, harm reduction works for others, but you need to have a suite that makes this work."

We see today the change, the ever-changing thing, even on the Downtown Eastside, and the work that's been done on homelessness. People always like to criticize that we're not doing enough. But it's not because we're not trying. We have to remember that there wasn't a single outreach worker on the streets of Vancouver 11 years ago. Now there are outreach workers in 47 communities in British Columbia, connecting people who might be homeless or at risk of homelessness to help and supports. There wasn't a single shelter 11 years ago in British Columbia that went 24-7. Today they all do. There wasn't a single shelter that had three meals a day, but they do. Those are the permanent shelters.

Then you have another plan that connects you with emergency shelters, the cold weather strategy, into the stuff in the winter, so those that don't want to come in still have an opportunity in the case of tough climate. There weren't 50 buildings bought in the city of Vancouver, renovated, turned around and saved. I shouldn't just say Vancouver, because they were in New Westminster and they were in other communities around the Lower Mainland — as well as building thousands of units for people for supportive housing.

The work doesn't stop, because the evolving of society is that people will be affected by whatever changes with regard to what can affect them. One doctor who does a lot of addictions said to me: "We're now seeing the mental illness from the crystal meth crisis of 15 years ago. Those folks have damaged themselves and their brain because some of those drugs are now coming into the mental health system."

[1625]

Now we have fentanyl, this terrible, scourging drug. I've been there and watched somebody bring somebody back to life with naloxone. It's staggering to see, because you have a fireman or you've got an ambulance worker or you've got a police officer having to administer something to bring someone's life back. You shake your head and say, "Well, one person has been brought

back 17 times,” and somebody will say to you: “Why do you do it?”

Because it’s humanity. It’s important. So you keep investing millions of dollars, and you keep trying to build the plan. Don’t be critical of the people — the non-profit sector and the people in B.C. who are working so hard to help these people’s lives turn around. When they fall 17 times, 20 times, five times, do you know what happens? There is a volunteer, or a person in a non-profit, that will pick them up and take care of them with love and caring.

That’s what this province is about. It’s about using economic development to build a future for young First Nations people, to get them out of poverty, reduce suicide rates in one area of the province. It’s also about getting the resources from another area of the province so that we can actually help the people that need it the most in the scourge of drugs and the opioid crisis. The reality is that it comes together like this.

If you remember one thing, going back to the people that I think so much about: it’s about humanity. It’s about love for your fellow man. And those that choose to politicize it forget that on the streets of Vancouver or the streets in Langley, somewhere most days there is somebody that is not doing as well as you are. It may be because they lost a loved one in West Vancouver from an opioid overdose. Or it could be someone that’s down and out in the Downtown Eastside.

But if you don’t connect the revenues, the expenses, the opportunities to provide services, you cannot change people’s lives. You can also remember that there is always going to be one more human that might need our help. We’re all human. We can all slip. We can all break down. And we all, at some time or another, either need a nice warm hug when somebody dies, or an opportunity to know that you’re loved and that someone will take care of you.

Hon. M. Bernier: Thanks to everybody in the House, especially my colleagues who have availed themselves of an important opportunity to stand up in the House and actually represent their constituents and speak to the throne speech. I commend them for doing that.

More importantly right now, I rise to represent my constituents of Peace River South. I want to start by thanking a few people. The last couple of weeks has been quite a difficult time, I would say, for a lot of people, waiting to make sure that we have stability here in British Columbia. I want to thank all the staff in the building, I want to thank our caucus staff, and I want to thank everybody else.

You know, it’s been quite troubling for them as well. Our B.C. Liberal caucus staff — just like the NDP staff, I would say, and our ministry staff — wake up every morning, working hard to make sure that we make B.C. a better place for absolutely everybody. I know the last couple of weeks has been very trying on them, and I commend them again for the work that they do.

I also want to thank all of my friends and supporters back in my riding, through this last election, for their support. I’m really proud of my riding, as I’m sure everybody in the House is. But I’m proud of my riding for a lot of special reasons. There are a lot of hard-working people in my riding that need to be commended for the work they do to help everybody else in British Columbia.

We have power. We have heat. We have the minerals. We have the products in my riding that the rest of British Columbia desires to have for the products that we need to make sure that we move forward in this society. I’m blessed with agriculture, forestry, mining, oil and gas, wind power, hydro power. Pretty well every sector that we talk about, especially around the resource sector, is represented in my riding.

I want to thank the hard-working men and women who wake up every single day, who go to work, who sacrifice so much family time — out in the camps, out at Site C, out in the oil and gas sector, out on the farms — to make sure that they’re doing the work that’s going to supply the products for everybody in this room, everybody in British Columbia and even around the globe.

I think we need to talk about that. We need to remember that when you go to the hospital, unfortunately... If you get sick or somebody in your family gets sick, when you go to the hospital, the products in the hospital, the products that we rely on are coming from the resource sector.

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That comes from rural British Columbia — the products that are extracted to make what we want, what we desire, what we really need. If you drive a car or you fly in a plane or you take a ferry or you take a SkyTrain, anything like that, please remember to thank the hard-working people in my riding in rural British Columbia that make that happen for all of us.

I think it’s important, though, not just rural British Columbia. We want to make sure that we talk about how we represent all of B.C. Rural British Columbia also needs to remember that we rely on the corporate industry and the infrastructure that are in urban centres as well. It’s important to remember the diversity that we have in the province of British Columbia but more important to remind ourselves that we need each other. We represent each other, we work to support each other, and that’s why we have the best province in Canada.

I think one of the things that we need to talk about is how that gets resolved. That’s through understanding, that’s through listening, and that’s making sure that we have a stable government so that when we talk about what we need to fulfil the objectives for the people of British Columbia, we’re able to achieve that.

Every member in the B.C. Liberal caucus, as I was saying, that has stood up here today has stood up and said that they’ve listened. They’ve stood up and said that they are going to work hard and continue to work hard not

only for their constituents but make good decisions for the people of British Columbia. I want to thank all my colleagues and applaud them again for standing up, because it's important — after an election, during an election, before an election, at all times — when you're an elected official that you're listening to everybody, not only your constituents but all of British Columbia.

Most importantly, we represent our constituents — I know that — in our ridings, but we make great decisions as a caucus, as a government. It's evident when you look at the province of British Columbia, the envy of Canada, that the B.C. Liberal caucus has done an impeccable job representing Canada and this province.

That's why I'm speaking against the amendment that was put on the floor here just a day or two ago. When you look at what we have.... I know that the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, is not happy with the results that he saw in the last B.C. election, with the B.C. Liberals receiving the most votes and the most seats. Albeit — and the House has talked about it, the media has talked about it and the people of B.C. have talked about it — that was not by much. But the B.C. Liberals still did form government, with the most seats.

My colleagues would know, as a wise Olympian from Parksville-Qualicum reminded us, that there's no race that is fair when a race is run and a silver and bronze medallist stand up and say they want to combine their medals and now say that they believe they are gold and won the race. That is not how things work.

Elections are a time to listen to ideas, elections are a time to listen to concerns, elections are a time to put forward a platform, and that's exactly what we did. We put forward a platform that we felt the majority of British Columbians wanted. We put forward a platform that would make sure that we see continued economic growth in the province. We put forward a platform to make sure that we would sustain our triple-A credit rating. We were wanting to invest in the people of British Columbia. We wanted to invest to ensure that we have the priorities met that the people of B.C. want, deserve and need.

Through the campaign and afterwards, and right through until today, what we've heard from people is that we put forward a great platform to achieve those goals. But they did also remind us that we didn't go far enough and we need to do more. That's what today and this last few weeks have been about.

I think what's important in your government is not a government that puts forward a platform, sticks 100 percent to that and is not willing to listen to the people. We have been willing to listen to the people. We did do that.

When you look at our throne speech, that's reflective of what our government has not only put forward to stick to our goals, to our principles, but to be adaptive, to look at other ways that we know and we've heard we need to be looking at doing. I know people are saying: "Did you take

things from the NDP platform? Did you take things from the Green platform?" Well, absolutely we did.

I don't think there's any person in this House that can stand up and say they have 100 percent of the answers to every single question. There's not one party that can stand up and say they represent all of British Columbia wholeheartedly and completely.

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That's why we've talked about making sure that we listen to each other. We look at each other's ideas and make sure that we look.... If somebody else has a good idea, how do we implement that? The difference is not about taking somebody else's platform and bringing it in and trying to say it's ours. It's about recognizing who had the idea, but more importantly, it's saying to British Columbians who's best in the position to actually implement that idea. That's what is important. Who has the governing track record to be able to achieve success for the people of British Columbia on whatever path that we go forward on?

The B.C. Liberal Party has 16 years of success, when you look at where we've come from, what we've been able to achieve and what we've been able to do for the people here in British Columbia. We know we need to do more, and we can do more. That's evident in our throne speech. I know there are ideas that the members opposite have put forward, which is why I assume today we're going to be hearing from them on whether they're going to support that or not and whether they're going to be moving forward to have stability in the province of British Columbia.

The results of this election, we all know, were interesting — to say the least. I don't know if anybody in this House can go anywhere over the last couple of weeks.... Since the election, people have questions, maybe concerns. Curiosity, I would say, is probably the main thing, because people want to know what's going on. Do we have a stable government? Can we have a stable government? How is this going to be looking going forward, for not only the short term but the long term for the people here in British Columbia?

After the election, with those results, we have a minority government — the first minority government in decades. The people of B.C. still put the B.C. Liberal government in power — albeit, again, with a minority government. What that really meant was that we needed to be able to look at opportunities to work together.

I was really honoured to be on the negotiating team with some of my colleagues in the B.C. Liberal caucus and with members from the Green Party, where we were willing to sit down to try to find a path forward, to try to have stability for the province of British Columbia. We brought forward ideas. We brought forward great discussions, with proposals to work together with the Green Party. I would say that we did so in good faith. We listened to their concerns. We listened to their ideas. A lot

of that, again, is reflected in our throne speech, as everybody will see.

More importantly, I would say, this week was reflective of those discussions by two bills that we brought forward. I would say — and I know that the leader of the Green Party would possibly argue — that we have a good relationship. I was fortunate enough to....

A. Weaver: We do.

Hon. M. Bernier: Oh, thank you. He says we do. We'll see how that goes after the vote that's coming later on today.

I was excited to be part of this with him, because during those negotiations, we did talk about where we had common goals and how we could work together to help the people of British Columbia.

One of the other things that I'm very happy about, though, is that after those negotiations, after the Green Party decided that they would side with the NDP possibly — the vote hasn't taken place yet; we're still waiting to see — we continued on those candid discussions over the last few weeks. I want to thank the member from the Green Party for that, because we've had some good discussions, some good insight into, I think, his party and my party on how we can move forward to really help stability. It shows that we can work together for the province.

I would say, though, to the Green Party, if they truly are worried about stability and those issues — wholeheartedly concerned about those issues that they brought forward — and about accomplishing those goals.... If those goals actually meant something to the Green Party and they actually wanted to achieve those, they have no choice but to vote in favour of this throne speech. This throne speech that was put forward will be able to achieve all of the goals that not only they've asked for but people of British Columbia have asked for and that we have agreed are important and that we've agreed need to be worked on.

Forty-five votes, with the B.C. Liberals and the Greens working together, can actually achieve long-term stability. I've heard from the Green members on and on, again, that what they're worried about is stability. It surprises me every morning when I think about the fact that we are moving forward to something that I would say is unstable, when the Green Party is talking about possibly not voting in favour of the throne speech. That would actually take us to a place of instability — the exact thing that they said they wanted to try to avoid.

[1640]

The members of the Green Party are going to have to stand out now, not only to the public but to their constituents. They're going to have to look in the mirror and explain to the people of B.C. why they were willing to sacrifice stability in the province of British Columbia. I guess it shows us all, unfortunately, that you can say what

you want before an election — that it's not about politics. This will actually reveal the truth.

The NDP do have fewer seats, and as we can hear right now, they're acting like they have a 30-seat majority in the House, which they do not, which is a little presumptuous and, in fact, I would say shows a little bit of a disregard for the people of B.C. that elected everybody here in this House.

The leader of the NDP stands in here and says that he has heard that it's his turn to govern. Well, I would argue he hasn't heard that from all of British Columbia, because he hasn't been to my riding. He hasn't been to most of rural British Columbia. In fact, the last time I saw the Leader of the Opposition in the South Peace riding, I believe, was in about 2012, when I was still the mayor. A lot has changed. It's too bad that the leader of the NDP has not been up there to see that.

What's also important is.... If somebody wants to be the leader and somebody wants to strive to be the Premier of the province, it's quite unfortunate.... In the last election, the leader of the NDP said that he was not going to rural British Columbia for the most part. He was going to stay in the areas that mattered. Well, I'm sorry. Every single person in this House has a riding that matters and deserves to be represented here.

It's unfortunate we're in a position where the NDP are now going to have to temporarily rent the members of the Green Party just to try to say that they have stability and have the numbers to govern. But that's not the case. We want stability in this House, and that's what we are trying to show again. We want to ensure that we move forward in the path that's beneficial for everybody in the province of British Columbia.

As the B.C. Liberals, we're proud. I don't think we have a lot to apologize for over the last 16 years. Can we be doing things better? Obviously. I think every single person in this House, including the members opposite, would say there are things that they could do differently or better. But what's really important is that we focus on what's important for British Columbians.

We don't want to apologize — nor need to apologize — for the fact that we are number one in Canada in our economy. We have some of the best job numbers in all of Canada thanks to our jobs plan and the great work that's been done in that ministry.

We look forward to the fact that we also have and want to keep some of the best health and education outcomes in all of Canada under a stable government, a government that the B.C. Liberal government has been able to achieve over the last 16 years, one that we want to continue making sure the people of B.C. are pleased to have. As I said: can we do better? Obviously. That's why we put forward a throne speech.

The B.C. Liberals won this election. We have the most seats. We have the leader. The opposition can say over and over again that he deserves to be Premier and that

he won the election. We all know that that's not the case. Contrary to what the NDP and Green members say, they have to accurately speak to — which they haven't yet — how they are going to bring stability to this House.

This House needs to function. It needs to function with stability to benefit the people of British Columbia. It needs to do that. We need to be able to govern and bring forward the things that the people of B.C. need, deserve and desire. That only happens under a stable government.

Every single person in this House is aware of what's about to happen. That's going to happen really shortly. There's going to be a vote. We all know that. It's going to be historic. You look out on the front lawns. You look in the buildings. You look at the smiles across from me. This is going to be a historic vote that's about to take place.

I'm proud to stand here and say wholeheartedly that myself and my colleagues on this side of the House have spent the last several weeks listening, speaking and talking about how we are willing to work together and make good decisions for the province of British Columbia and for the people of British Columbia.

I can honestly say it's tragic — I would say tragic — that the members opposite have not done the same. The members opposite have had the opportunity to stand in this House to say what they like or don't like. They have chosen not to do that.

[1645]

I think that's a disregard to the people here in British Columbia and their constituents as well. That is disrespectful.

Interjection.

Hon. M. Bernier: Exactly. Because — you know what? — it's their duty to stand up to say what they believe in or not believe in. All the members on this side of the House did that.

I feel that it's important that we make clear to everyone in this chamber and to all British Columbians that are watching here today that we — as the B.C. Liberal caucus, as the present government of British Columbia — have done what we can do to listen and to put forward a plan to move British Columbia forward in the best way that we see possible, listening to their concerns. We're going to continue to do that.

Stability is a word that we've heard over the last couple of weeks. I assume it might be a word that we hear, possibly, for the next couple of months, because we need to ensure we have that. I haven't seen any evidence yet that the groups across from us are able to bring stability.

I want to be clear that everything that we have done so far is to show, to prove and to showcase that we can bring stability for the province of British Columbia in this very delicate situation of a minority government — one that is really unprecedented in a lot of ways, but one that we are willing to work hard to do. We're willing to roll up our

sleeves as a government to make sure that we continue on with all the great things that B.C. has seen, because we know there's more to do.

When you look from the Premier's speech on election night, hon. Speaker, to the throne speech last week, the B.C. Liberals have focused on the best interests possible for the citizens of British Columbia. We've put forward policies that are agreeable to all parties. We have worked tirelessly to try to make this Legislature stable, and we had hoped that the members opposite would have seen that and agreed and been willing to work with us to achieve those goals, to not take the province of British Columbia backwards, to be able to celebrate the successes we've had, and to make sure we continue striving, working together and helping the people of B.C.

I guess we'll see if the NDP and the independent MLAs — the Green MLAs — care about stability or not or if they just care, as we've seen, about being in power. I must admit that after watching the lust for power over the last couple of weeks.... The comments that I'm hearing, the cheers and jeers and the comments from the members opposite — that day in and day out have just asked us to step down so they can take over....

It's quite unfortunate that the respect for the process and for the constitution in this House is not taking place. You would think that we would all want to do the right thing for this House — respect for this House, respect for the process and, more importantly, respect for the people of British Columbia.

So one thing that I want to say to end here. I want to give....

Interjections.

Hon. M. Bernier: And again, the members opposite. It's a perfect example of the comments opposite — of just how disrespectful they can be when somebody's up speaking, with the comments that are coming. I won't bother repeating some of them into *Hansard* for the members opposite. But again, it just shows the disrespect that we have under an NDP government that they think they can achieve.

One thing that I'll end with is that this side of the House, our government, promised this chamber and promised the people of British Columbia that regardless of how the vote turns out today, the B.C. Liberal Party will never, ever stop working for the people of British Columbia.

We've worked hard over the last 16 years, representing the people of B.C. Our track record of success in almost every economic indicator should show the people of B.C. what can happen when you roll up your sleeves and listen to their concerns and help them to make sure that we have the money for all of those other social programs that people desire, need and expect.

So whether we are on this side of the House or that side of the House, our commitment as a B.C. Liberal govern-

ment is that we will never, ever stop working as hard as we can for the people of British Columbia.

[1650]

Hon. C. Clark: I rise to speak to this amendment to the throne speech today. I know it is unusual for a sitting Premier to enter the throne speech debate, but we are in unusual times in British Columbia. We all acknowledge that.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

The May election presented us in this House with what I think is a unique opportunity to hear and to act on the message that British Columbians sent us when they voted. British Columbians want us all to listen better. They want us all to work across party lines. They want us all to find the best ideas, no matter where they come from, and bring them to life. They want us to find a better balance between job creation and economic growth and social and environmental priorities. They want us to move faster to help out those in need, and they want us to continue to take bold steps on climate change.

Now, you know, when I've been successful in my life, it has been because I've been a fighter. That's what having older brothers teaches you to do, and it's what believing fiercely in ideas leads you to do. But I know, as I reflect on this election, that British Columbians want something different from me and they want something different from all of the members in this House.

That's why we put forward a throne speech with an open mind and deep humility, while protecting our core values and the things that we will always believe in: that the best way to build the life you want is to get a good education and a good job; that we need to balance budgets and eliminate debt today so that we don't have to raise taxes or leave a burden for our kids; that enterprise and innovation are the strongest engines of an economy, not government; and a sincere recognition that B.C. is successful because we work together, because urban British Columbia needs rural B.C. and rural B.C. needs our thriving urban centres.

But when we go into political combat, we all acknowledge that we sometimes spend so much energy fighting with one another in here that it's hard to listen to what British Columbians want.

The throne speech is an answer to that. It's an answer to what voters told us on May 9. It's an acknowledgement — a sincere acknowledgement — that we didn't get it all right. It is an expression of renewed priorities, based on what voters told us, including that they want us to work across party lines with one another.

It spends the wealth created by British Columbians to make progress on the key social issues that every one of us wants to see addressed. It takes bold action to make sure that living in British Columbia is affordable, es-

pecially as growth continues. And it expands on our commitment to fight climate change to protect this magnificent place for our children.

We need to do more. We need to do more, and we can do more. We can do more because we've built the strongest economy in Canada. Having Canada's strongest economy also means we have a much bigger surplus than we'd expected.

Now, the members opposite, I know, have a hard time believing that, and I know why. When it comes to pre-election budgets, they have had very much the opposite experience. In another historic election, the NDP government was about to face the polls. After deficits and credit downgrades and a mass exodus of British Columbians, they had to start looking as though they'd cleaned up that mess. So before they faced the voters, they hid the deficit from British Columbians.

Now we have a very different problem in British Columbia: not how to hide a deficit but what to do with a much bigger-than-expected surplus. I am lucky, not because I inherited the strongest economy in Canada when I became Premier six years ago. I am lucky because I took on this job in the best province in Canada, a place where you just can't hold people's imaginations back, a place where if government builds the right foundation, everyone is bound to succeed. And over the last six years — it's true — we took an old-fashioned approach to building the budget. I do mean that in the very best sense, because we built up our savings and we watched every dollar.

[1655]

That's the way I was raised in Burnaby. That's how my mom and dad ran our household. And we're going to keep watching every dollar because taxpayers deserve nothing less.

We'll invest the money that we have, not the money that we wish we had, because people work hard to earn those paycheques. For every dollar that they earn, they need to know that government is going to take less, not more, so that they can have more money in their pockets to look after the people that they love so much.

But I've heard the message from the public in British Columbia that we need to move faster — not recklessly; people want to know that their money's going to be spent right — on the priorities that are important to British Columbians.

Let me start with child care. People can't wait a decade for a child care plan to be delivered, and they don't want one that is based on a failed model that led to four-year wait-lists in places like Quebec. They want it now, and they want it to work.

Over the past two weeks, I've visited child care facilities in Surrey and the Tri-Cities, as well as many others that I've visited over the years. I heard from parents, operators, child care workers. They all told me that the need is now. It's not when their kids have their drivers' licences; their need is now.

I am willing to bet that in this House, I am.... Well, in British Columbia, I'm unique amongst B.C. Premiers in my personal experience with the child care system. I was pregnant when I was in the opposition, and I had a baby when I was a cabinet minister. My son, Hamish, is just about to get his driver's licence now. I brought him to work with me on some days, and I found child care for him in my hometown on the others. I remember at the time thinking that balancing all of that was the hardest thing I would ever have to do. Now, it wasn't the hardest thing I would ever have to do, but it felt that way at the time.

I also know that child care is not just a women's issue. Child care is an issue for all of us. Women need and women want to work. But we all embrace, men and women, our collective responsibility to make sure that kids get their best start, and that's what British Columbians told us. Not only do they need more access to child care; they need it sooner. We need to deliver high-quality child care. We need to deliver more of it. It needs to be affordable, and it needs to come now.

The throne speech that the opposition is seeking to amend today will amend the 2017 budget to make a \$1 billion investment in child care, early childhood education, over the next four years. This is the largest boost in B.C.'s history, and it's one that I know British Columbia families are looking forward to and need now.

But caring for children doesn't just stop with child care. Since the last NDP government, child poverty in British Columbia has been reduced by half. Now, we still have a long way to go. We need a new poverty reduction strategy that focuses on children. It's time to increase social assistance rates to help our most vulnerable, many of whom are parents.

We all know, though, that even with those changes, the best way out of poverty is still a job. So we're building on the success of the single-parent employment initiative with the LIFT program to help unemployed and low-income parents, to support them in finding a way out of the poverty trap by supporting their child care, their tuition costs, so they can get the skills that they need to find a better job without having to quit the job they have now.

We've also launched a renewed focus on mental health, bringing down wait times, closing gaps in the system, improving access and making sure that now, at every school, there will be one trained professional there to recognize mental illness early so that we can get those kids diagnosed and treated before their issue gets more acute.

After years of hard work, we have built the best economy in Canada. While we would never slow down this economy, because economic growth means jobs for working people, growth also brings a lot of its own challenges. We know that.

As more and more Canadians march with their feet to British Columbia, coming here for better opportunities and a better life, the demand for housing goes up. Let's

be clear, though. A lot of other jurisdictions would be happier to have our problems than their own, but that doesn't mean that the housing crunch isn't still a huge problem for a lot of people.

[1700]

That's why we ended self-regulation in the real estate industry. It's why we partnered with qualified buyers to support them with a down payment of up to \$32,000, why we made an almost-billion-dollar investment in affordable housing. Those first tenants, by the way, will be moving in, in a few months.

Those actions have had a real impact, but we knew at the time that they were only a first step, and we know we need to do more. We have to increase supply, especially of starter homes and middle-class housing. We need to do more to encourage municipalities to speed up construction. Let's get more housing on the market so there is more for people to choose from. We'll launch a new rent-to-own program to help middle-class renters enter the market.

We all want to live in communities that are economically — not just culturally — diverse, in communities that our kids can afford to live in, and to preserve that value, we must be purposeful. We must create middle-class housing, and we must protect its place in our cities.

Now, those are just two ideas. We all know that the housing problem is complex. That's why, this fall, we would bring together and welcome ideas from all parties and from participants at a housing summit.

Of course, you can't talk about housing without also talking about transit. People want and deserve connected and livable communities. Nobody wants to waste hundreds of hours every year crawling along choked arteries so they can get home after their kids are already in bed. We must connect communities more efficiently, and our transit plans should be ambitious in order to do that.

Transit has to be built with a vision of how we'd like our region to evolve, because if we don't shape growth, growth is going to shape us. And we have to ensure that transit and transportation are affordable.

We strongly heard from British Columbians, especially in the Lower Mainland, that all communities should be treated equally. That's why we will eliminate tolls on the Port Mann Bridge.

British Columbians have a unique connection to the environment, to nature. We take pride in it, we live in it, we invite people to come visit it, and we make a living off it. British Columbia has assembled the third-largest park system in North America. That's amazing. Only Canada and the United States have a bigger park system than this province does.

We will answer the voters' call and we will protect British Columbia's natural beauty by significantly increasing our investment in B.C. parks. Camping in B.C. parks is an iconic vacation for people from around the world. I spent every summer with my family, some of it in those parks camping, with all six of us in the back of a Rambler,

which is why it was something my family could afford. It is still something that families can afford.

When I think back on that experience, I remember again how lucky I am to have been raised in this beautiful province. We are so uniquely blessed. We have an enviable and rare opportunity to electrify our economy with clean energy, including wind and solar and hydro.

The Site C clean energy project is the centrepiece of that vision. It's a way to supply that growing energy need for our province with emissions-free power for 100 years. If we want every passenger vehicle in Metro Vancouver to be emissions-free by 2035 — and we do — we are going to need all of that clean power plus some, and we'll need all the jobs that come with it.

I met with families who depend on Site C jobs when I was up in Fort St. John last week. One is able to start a family. One saved their home from foreclosure. Another is able to stay home and home-school their special child, all because Site C kept them working.

British Columbia is a leader in keeping people working, and we are also a leader in carbon pricing. Now Ottawa says they want to be a leader too, with a provincial mandate of \$50-a-tonne carbon tax by 2022. To get there, we will raise B.C.'s carbon tax by \$5 a tonne starting in 2019, and it will stay revenue-neutral. For all future carbon tax increases, the provincial sales tax will be reduced by a corresponding amount, and we are taking the advice of the climate leadership team in ensuring that energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries are protected while their carbon taxes increase as well.

[1705]

Let me speak to the question that everyone in this chamber has raised in the last few days, because I've heard a lot of people say we've changed. But I know leaders don't lead by refusing to adapt. Leaders do not lead by refusing to hear and refusing to listen.

This Saturday we celebrate 150 years since Confederation, an event that is happening because leaders like Wilfred Laurier changed their minds. B.C.'s greatest Premier, W.A.C. Bennett, was famous for a second look. My predecessor adapted to changing times by introducing the first carbon tax in North America, a model that other jurisdictions are still trying to catch up to.

The NDP would have cancelled that carbon tax. They based an entire election on it, but they came around, and that was wise.

The member for Oak Bay–Gordon Head has also changed his mind since 2009. He was one of the most ardent supporters of Site C. It couldn't get built fast enough for him, he said, and today that's not so much true.

On Kinder Morgan, on ride-sharing and on budgets that balance themselves, members opposite have changed course time and time again.

Lately, they have changed their minds on something else, something that I think is even more profoundly important. Every one of them said they wanted to see pol-

itics get done differently. Every single one of them said they wanted more collaboration in this House. Every single one of them said we needed to find ways to work across partisan lines and work together, and I agree. But at the very first opportunity to do that, they refused.

On a bill introducing something that every single one of them claimed to support, campaign finance reform, they wouldn't even read the bill, much less debate or amend it. Now, if we have to go back to the polls, we will do it without those reforms being made, because they stood in the way of change or perhaps because they never really believed in it in the first place.

They know the math doesn't work. They know that this House can't function without a working majority. As the party with the largest number of seats and as the incumbent government, we have a duty to the people of British Columbia and to the constitution of our province. That is to listen to the public and to seek the confidence of the House.

We attempted, in good faith, to work with the Greens, but they wouldn't even hear our offer. The member from Oak Bay came here saying he wanted a more civil debate, more good ideas being adopted from all parties, and instead, he behaved exactly like those he's criticized all these years.

This week we kept that door open. The member from Oak Bay knows it stayed open, but he did still decide to slam it shut.

And what have the NDP offered in the last six weeks? Grasping for power and vowing to twist the rules of our Legislature in order to hang on to it. No ideas that show any outreach to B.C.'s rural communities or the majority of British Columbians who didn't agree with them. Members who think it's their job to represent only the constituents who voted for them.

No, it's true. Forest workers, oil and gas workers, ranchers, miners, the women and men who build this province, including those who are grateful to be working on Site C. No, they did not vote for the opposition, but the opposition has a duty to represent them nonetheless.

After watching this debate unfold, after watching the behaviour of the opposition, it is more obvious now than it ever was that the opposition never had any intention to make this House work. They never had the numbers, and they never had a plan to make it work if they found themselves in power. Their only intention was to get the Greens on the dotted line and then tell us just to wait and see how they could contrive to bend the rules of our democracy so that they could hang on to power.

[1710]

For the past six years, we have worked hard to build Canada's number one economy. In job creation, in economic performance, in balanced budgets, we lead this country by a long shot. Employment has grown by 3.6 percent. That is the fastest in Canada — 190,000 jobs, and those are not statistics.

I would remind the members of the opposition, if they should find themselves on this side of the House, that those are not statistics. Those are real people. They cannot forget about them. They must remember how important it is not just to spend money, but to make sure our economy produces money. The way to do that is to make sure that we're creating jobs across the province, and not just government jobs — private sector jobs, jobs that are going to grow British Columbia and make it possible for us to look after one another.

While it may be true not many of the hard-working men and women of British Columbia who get themselves dirty in the course of their work every day voted for the opposition, nonetheless, if they find themselves on this side of the House, they will need to find a way to represent them and to make sure that their voices are also heard in this chamber. Because that is what allows us to make the investments that we've made in hospitals, in schools. It's what has allowed us to settle labour agreements and share economic gains with the B.C. government workers.

Since 2013 alone, we've signed 465 economic partnership agreements with First Nations, and we stand very, very proud of that. We stand proud of that record, but we accept, with great humility, the results of the election. We accept, with great humility, that we are not perfect and that on some things, we missed. We need to listen harder, and we need to change.

Now, I love British Columbia. I love the energy and the spirit I have found in every single corner of this province. There are people in B.C. making and doing and dreaming. They're doing things that make me so grateful for the privilege of serving all of them. So if this marks the end of our government, then I stand here in humility and with great gratitude to the people of British Columbia. If this results in an election, then we will put forward our throne speech to the people of the province.

It's a genuine offering that respects the spirit by which we have approached these last seven weeks. It reflects voters' judgment, learning from our successes and learning from our failures and putting forward a more inclusive vision of a more optimistic and hopeful future. I think it is one that reflects the best ideas from across the political spectrum, one that is grounded in a commitment to keep people working, in a firm understanding that a strong economy provides the makings of a fair and equal and a compassionate society, one that makes us all proud to call ourselves British Columbians.

[1715]

Mr. Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, the question is the amendment to the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne moved by the Leader of the Official Opposition, seconded by the member for Cowichan Valley, which reads that:

“Be it resolved that the motion ‘We, Her Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia in Session assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious Speech which Your Honour has addressed to us at the opening of the present Session,’ be amended by adding the following: ‘but Her Honour’s present government does not have the confidence of this House.’”

[1720]

Amendment approved on the following division:

YEAS — 44

Darcy	Simpson	Robinson
Farnworth	Horgan	James
Dix	Ralston	Mark
Fleming	Conroy	Chandra Herbert
Chow	Ma	Leonard
Fraser	Weaver	Furstenau
Olsen	Rice	Eby
Mungall	Chen	Bains
Elmore	Kang	Popham
Trevena	Donaldson	Krog
Heyman	Routley	Simons
Beare	Sims	Dean
Routledge	Singh	Glumac
Chouhan	Kahlon	Begg
Brar		D'Eith

NAYS — 42

Kyllo	Milobar	Larson
Foster	Stilwell	Oakes
Letnick	Wat	Johal
Sturdy	Rustad	Ross
Morris	Barnett	Clovechok
Isaacs	Hunt	Gibson
Ashton	Davies	Paton
Throness	Shypitka	Plecas
Cadieux	Stone	Polak
de Jong	Clark	Coleman
Wilkinson	Reid	Bond
Bernier	Sullivan	Lee
Tegart	Yap	Redies
Sultan	Thorntwaite	Martin

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, as the amendment to the motion for Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne has been adopted, it now becomes a formality that the House dispose of the motion for Address in Reply as amended. Accordingly, the question is on the motion as amended.

Leave has been granted to waive the time. The question is on the motion as amended.

Motion, as amended, approved on the following division:

YEAS — 44

Darcy	Simpson	Robinson
Farnworth	Horgan	James
Dix	Ralston	Mark
Fleming	Conroy	Chandra Herbert
Chow	Ma	Leonard
Fraser	Weaver	Furstenau
Olsen	Rice	Eby
Mungall	Chen	Bains
Elmore	Kang	Popham
Trevena	Donaldson	Krog
Heyman	Routley	Simons
Beare	Sims	Dean
Routledge	Singh	Glumac
Chouhan	Kahlon	Begg
Brar		D'Eith

NAYS — 42

Kyllo	Milobar	Larson
Foster	Stilwell	Oakes
Letnick	Wat	Johal
Sturdy	Rustad	Ross
Morris	Barnett	Clovechok
Isaacs	Hunt	Gibson
Ashton	Davies	Paton
Throness	Shypitka	Pleacas
Cadieux	Stone	Polak
de Jong	Clark	Coleman

Wilkinson	Reid	Bond
Bernier	Sullivan	Lee
Tegart	Yap	Redies
Sultan	Thornthwaite	Martin

[1725]

Hon. M. de Jong: Mr. Speaker, it's my duty to move that the House, at its rising, do stand adjourned until it appears to the satisfaction of the Speaker, after consultation with the government, that the public interest requires that the House shall meet or until the Speaker may be advised by the government that it is desired to prorogue the first session of the 41st parliament of the province of British Columbia. The Speaker may give notice that he is so satisfied or has been so advised, and thereupon the House shall meet at the time stated in such notice and, as the case may be, may transact its business as if it had been duly adjourned to that time and date. And that in the event of the Speaker being unable to act owing to illness or other cause, the Deputy Speaker shall act in his stead for the purpose of this order.

Motion approved.

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

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

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