



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

Second Session, 42nd Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT
OF DEBATES
(HANSARD)

Monday, November 15, 2021
Morning Sitting
Issue No. 127

THE HONOURABLE RAJ CHOUHAN, SPEAKER

ISSN 1499-2175

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Her Honour the Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

SECOND SESSION, 42ND PARLIAMENT

SPEAKER OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Honourable Raj Chouhan

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Premier and President of the Executive Council	Hon. John Horgan
Deputy Premier and Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General	Hon. Mike Farnworth
Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Training	Hon. Anne Kang
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries	Hon. Lana Popham
Attorney General and Minister Responsible for Housing	Hon. David Eby, QC
Minister of Children and Family Development	Hon. Mitzi Dean
Minister of State for Child Care	Hon. Katrina Chen
Minister of Citizens' Services	Hon. Lisa Beare
Minister of Education	Hon. Jennifer Whiteside
Minister of Energy, Mines and Low Carbon Innovation	Hon. Bruce Ralston, QC
Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy	Hon. George Heyman
Minister of Finance	Hon. Selina Robinson
Minister of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development	Hon. Katrine Conroy
Minister of State for Lands and Natural Resource Operations	Hon. Nathan Cullen
Minister of Health and Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs	Hon. Adrian Dix
Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation	Hon. Murray Rankin, QC
Minister of Jobs, Economic Recovery and Innovation	Hon. Ravi Kahlon
Minister of State for Trade	Hon. George Chow
Minister of Labour	Hon. Harry Bains
Minister of Mental Health and Addictions	Hon. Sheila Malcolmson
Minister of Municipal Affairs	Hon. Josie Osborne
Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction	Hon. Nicholas Simons
Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture and Sport	Hon. Melanie Mark
Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure	Hon. Rob Fleming
Minister of State for Infrastructure	Hon. Bowinn Ma

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Leader of the Official Opposition	Shirley Bond
Leader of the Third Party	Sonia Furstenuau
Deputy Speaker	Spencer Chandra Herbert
Assistant Deputy Speaker	Norm Letnick
Deputy Chair, Committee of the Whole	Ronna-Rae Leonard
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly	Kate Ryan-Lloyd
Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel	Seunghee Suzie Seo
Clerk Assistant, Parliamentary Services	Artour Sogomonian
Clerk of Committees	Jennifer Arril
Clerk Assistant, Committees and Interparliamentary Relations	Susan Sourial
Senior Research Analyst	Karan Riarh
Sergeant-at-Arms	Ray Robitaille

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF MEMBERS

Alexis, Pam (BC NDP) Abbotsford-Mission
 Anderson, Brittany (BC NDP) Nelson-Creston
 Ashton, Dan (BC Liberal Party) Pentiction
 Babchuk, Michele (BC NDP) North Island
 Bailey, Brenda (BC NDP) Vancouver-False Creek
 Bains, Hon. Harry (BC NDP) Surrey-Newton
 Banman, Bruce (BC Liberal Party) Abbotsford South
 Beare, Hon. Lisa (BC NDP) Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows
 Begg, Garry (BC NDP) Surrey-Guildford
 Bernier, Mike (BC Liberal Party) Peace River South
 Bond, Shirley (BC Liberal Party) Prince George-Valemount
 Brar, Jagrup (BC NDP) Surrey-Fleetwood
 Cadieux, Stephanie (BC Liberal Party) Surrey South
 Chandra Herbert, Spencer (BC NDP) Vancouver-West End
 Chant, Susie (BC NDP) North Vancouver-Seymour
 Chen, Hon. Katrina (BC NDP) Burnaby-Lougheed
 Chouhan, Hon. Raj (BC NDP) Burnaby-Edmonds
 Chow, Hon. George (BC NDP) Vancouver-Fraserview
 Clovechok, Doug (BC Liberal Party) Columbia River-Revelstoke
 Conroy, Hon. Katrine (BC NDP) Kootenay West
 Coulter, Dan (BC NDP) Chilliwack
 Cullen, Hon. Nathan (BC NDP) Stikine
 Davies, Dan (BC Liberal Party) Peace River North
 de Jong, Michael, QC (BC Liberal Party) Abbotsford West
 Dean, Hon. Mitzi (BC NDP) Esquimalt-Metchosin
 D'Eith, Bob (BC NDP) Maple Ridge-Mission
 Dix, Hon. Adrian (BC NDP) Vancouver-Kingsway
 Doerkson, Lorne (BC Liberal Party) Cariboo-Chilcotin
 Donnelly, Fin (BC NDP) Coquitlam-Burke Mountain
 Dykeman, Megan (BC NDP) Langley East
 Eby, Hon. David, QC (BC NDP) Vancouver-Point Grey
 Elmore, Mable (BC NDP) Vancouver-Kensington
 Farnworth, Hon. Mike (BC NDP) Port Coquitlam
 Fleming, Hon. Rob (BC NDP) Victoria-Swan Lake
 Furstenaу, Sonia (BC Green Party) Cowichan Valley
 Glumac, Rick (BC NDP) Port Moody-Coquitlam
 Greene, Kelly (BC NDP) Richmond-Steveston
 Halford, Trevor (BC Liberal Party) Surrey-White Rock
 Heyman, Hon. George (BC NDP) Vancouver-Fairview
 Horgan, Hon. John (BC NDP) Langford-Juan de Fuca
 Kahlon, Hon. Ravi (BC NDP) Delta North
 Kang, Hon. Anne (BC NDP) Burnaby-Deer Lake
 Kirkpatrick, Karin (BC Liberal Party) West Vancouver-Capilano
 Kylo, Greg (BC Liberal Party) Shuswap
 Lee, Michael (BC Liberal Party) Vancouver-Langara
 Leonard, Ronna-Rae (BC NDP) Courtenay-Comox
 Letnick, Norm (BC Liberal Party) Kelowna-Lake Country
 Lore, Grace (BC NDP) Victoria-Beacon Hill
 Ma, Hon. Bowinn (BC NDP) North Vancouver-Lonsdale
 Malcolmson, Hon. Sheila (BC NDP) Nanaimo
 Mark, Hon. Melanie (BC NDP) Vancouver-Mount Pleasant
 Mercier, Andrew (BC NDP) Langley
 Merrifield, Renee (BC Liberal Party) Kelowna-Mission
 Milobar, Peter (BC Liberal Party) Kamloops-North Thompson
 Morris, Mike (BC Liberal Party) Prince George-Mackenzie
 Oakes, Coralee (BC Liberal Party) Cariboo North
 Olsen, Adam (BC Green Party) Saanich North and the Islands
 Osborne, Hon. Josie (BC NDP) Mid Island-Pacific Rim
 Paddon, Kelli (BC NDP) Chilliwack-Kent
 Paton, Ian (BC Liberal Party) Delta South
 Popham, Hon. Lana (BC NDP) Saanich South
 Ralston, Hon. Bruce, QC (BC NDP) Surrey-Whalley
 Rankin, Hon. Murray, QC (BC NDP) Oak Bay-Gordon Head
 Rice, Jennifer (BC NDP) North Coast
 Robinson, Hon. Selina (BC NDP) Coquitlam-Maillardville
 Ross, Ellis (BC Liberal Party) Skeena
 Routledge, Janet (BC NDP) Burnaby North
 Routley, Doug (BC NDP) Nanaimo-North Cowichan
 Russell, Roly (BC NDP) Boundary-Similkameen
 Rustad, John (BC Liberal Party) Nechako Lakes
 Sandhu, Harwinder (BC NDP) Vernon-Monashee
 Sharma, Niki (BC NDP) Vancouver-Hastings
 Shypitka, Tom (BC Liberal Party) Kootenay East
 Simons, Hon. Nicholas (BC NDP) Powell River-Sunshine Coast
 Sims, Jinny (BC NDP) Surrey-Panorama
 Singh, Aman (BC NDP) Richmond-Queensborough
 Singh, Rachna (BC NDP) Surrey-Green Timbers
 Starchuk, Mike (BC NDP) Surrey-Cloverdale
 Stewart, Ben (BC Liberal Party) Kelowna West
 Stone, Todd (BC Liberal Party) Kamloops-South Thompson
 Sturdy, Jordan (BC Liberal Party) West Vancouver-Sea to Sky
 Tegart, Jackie (BC Liberal Party) Fraser-Nicola
 Walker, Adam (BC NDP) Parksville-Qualicum
 Wat, Teresa (BC Liberal Party) Richmond North Centre
 Whiteside, Hon. Jennifer (BC NDP) New Westminster
 Wilkinson, Andrew, QC (BC Liberal Party) Vancouver-Quilchena
 Yao, Henry (BC NDP) Richmond South Centre

LIST OF MEMBERS BY RIDING

Abbotsford-Mission Pam Alexis
 Abbotsford South Bruce Banman
 Abbotsford West Michael de Jong, QC
 Boundary-Similkameen Roly Russell
 Burnaby-Deer Lake Hon. Anne Kang
 Burnaby-Edmonds Hon. Raj Chouhan
 Burnaby-Lougheed Hon. Katrina Chen
 Burnaby North Janet Routledge
 Cariboo-Chilcotin Lorne Doerkson
 Cariboo North Coralee Oakes
 Chilliwack Dan Coulter
 Chilliwack-Kent Kelli Paddon
 Columbia River-Revelstoke Doug Clovechok
 Coquitlam-Burke Mountain Fin Donnelly
 Coquitlam-Maillardville Hon. Selina Robinson
 Courtenay-Comox Ronna-Rae Leonard
 Cowichan Valley Sonia Furstenaу
 Delta North Hon. Ravi Kahlon
 Delta South Ian Paton
 Esquimalt-Metchosin Hon. Mitzi Dean
 Fraser-Nicola Jackie Tegart
 Kamloops-North Thompson Peter Milobar
 Kamloops-South Thompson Todd Stone
 Kelowna-Lake Country Norm Letnick
 Kelowna-Mission Renee Merrifield
 Kelowna West Ben Stewart
 Kootenay East Tom Shypitka
 Kootenay West Hon. Katrine Conroy
 Langford-Juan de Fuca Hon. John Horgan
 Langley Andrew Mercier
 Langley East Megan Dykeman
 Maple Ridge-Mission Bob D'Eith
 Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Hon. Lisa Beare
 Mid Island-Pacific Rim Hon. Josie Osborne
 Nanaimo Hon. Sheila Malcolmson
 Nanaimo-North Cowichan Doug Routley
 Nechako Lakes John Rustad
 Nelson-Creston Brittany Anderson
 New Westminster Hon. Jennifer Whiteside
 North Coast Jennifer Rice
 North Island Michele Babchuk
 North Vancouver-Lonsdale Hon. Bowinn Ma
 North Vancouver-Seymour Susie Chant
 Oak Bay-Gordon Head Hon. Murray Rankin, QC
 Parksville-Qualicum Adam Walker
 Peace River North Dan Davies
 Peace River South Mike Bernier
 Pentiction Dan Ashton
 Port Coquitlam Hon. Mike Farnworth
 Port Moody-Coquitlam Rick Glumac
 Powell River-Sunshine Coast Hon. Nicholas Simons
 Prince George-Mackenzie Mike Morris
 Prince George-Valemount Shirley Bond
 Richmond North Centre Teresa Wat
 Richmond-Queensborough Aman Singh
 Richmond South Centre Henry Yao
 Richmond-Steveston Kelly Greene
 Saanich North and the Islands Adam Olsen
 Saanich South Hon. Lana Popham
 Shuswap Greg Kylo
 Skeena Ellis Ross
 Stikine Hon. Nathan Cullen
 Surrey-Cloverdale Mike Starchuk
 Surrey-Fleetwood Jagrup Brar
 Surrey-Green Timbers Rachna Singh
 Surrey-Guildford Garry Begg
 Surrey-Newton Hon. Harry Bains
 Surrey-Panorama Jinny Sims
 Surrey South Stephanie Cadieux
 Surrey-Whalley Hon. Bruce Ralston, QC
 Surrey-White Rock Trevor Halford
 Vancouver-Fairview Hon. George Heyman
 Vancouver-False Creek Brenda Bailey
 Vancouver-Fraserview Hon. George Chow
 Vancouver-Hastings Niki Sharma
 Vancouver-Kensington Mable Elmore
 Vancouver-Kingsway Hon. Adrian Dix
 Vancouver-Langara Michael Lee
 Vancouver-Mount Pleasant Hon. Melanie Mark
 Vancouver-Point Grey Hon. David Eby, QC
 Vancouver-Quilchena Andrew Wilkinson, QC
 Vancouver-West End Spencer Chandra Herbert
 Vernon-Monashee Harwinder Sandhu
 Victoria-Beacon Hill Grace Lore
 Victoria-Swan Lake Hon. Rob Fleming
 West Vancouver-Capilano Karin Kirkpatrick
 West Vancouver-Sea to Sky Jordan Sturdy

CONTENTS

Monday, November 15, 2021
Morning Sitting

Page

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Statements.....	3979
Catch and release	
L. Doerkson	
G. Begg	
COP26	
B. Anderson	
P. Milobar	
Support for B.C. businesses	
D. Davies	
B. Bailey	
Understanding decriminalization and harm reduction	
H. Yao	
T. Halford	
Private Members' Motions	3988
Motion 19 — Role of parents in care of children	
K. Kirkpatrick	
K. Paddon	
J. Tegart	
R. Leonard	
T. Shypitka	
A. Mercier	
D. Ashton	
J. Rice	
M. Bernier	
J. Brar	
T. Halford	

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2021

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Routine Business

Prayers and reflections: R. Russell.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Statements

CATCH AND RELEASE

L. Doerkson: Today I rise to speak on an issue of growing concern both in my community and throughout British Columbia. It is one that needs to be addressed on a wider scale to keep people safe and ensure that our cities and towns are places where businesses can thrive and families can live without fear, because right now that is not the reality for far too many in our province.

[10:05 a.m.]

I have risen in this House in the past to speak on this issue of prolific offenders, and since then, in every corner of the province, the problem has worsened. Our province's current catch-and-release style of approach is clearly not working, and it will take every level of government working together to bring about real change.

[S. Chandra Herbert in the chair.]

Prolific offenders are generally described as individuals with a high criminal offence rate who are considered to be at high risk of reoffending following their release from custody. There is growing consensus that a disproportionate amount of crime, particularly property crime, is committed by a minority of offenders — individuals who fall into the category of prolific offender.

We can see this throughout the province: in rural B.C., downtown Vancouver, on Vancouver Island and in Prince George. There is nowhere in this province, it seems, that is untouched by this issue.

Just this week an individual was arrested in downtown Vancouver for attempting to steal \$730 worth of merchandise from a cosmetics store. This came only two days after the person was released from custody for allegedly stealing 47 pairs of yoga pants from a downtown store. Police reported that this man had 103 prior criminal convictions, 38 of those for theft.

In Prince George, this week two prolific offenders were arrested and discovered to be in possession of firearms in addition to other illicit items.

In September, a man on Vancouver Island was sentenced to 44 months in prison for more than 60 charges,

mostly relating to property crimes, including break-and-enters in multiple communities around the Island.

In my own community, last winter the Williams Lake RCMP actually took the unusual step of issuing a news release about one individual who was arrested after failing to appear in court on seven outstanding warrants. However, after a bail hearing that included opposition by a Crown counsel to release the offender, this individual was released again, despite seven warrants and over 20 criminal charges.

This is a significant problem. It is clear it is not simply a matter of individual failure or responsibility but one of systematic failure. Our system is not built in such a way as to truly address these situations like this. We are seeing the widespread impacts of these structural issues.

Communities are feeling increasingly concerned and fearful. Businesses are not just feeling the economic impact but the social impacts as well. The B.C. Chamber of Commerce highlighted in a 2019 report: "The economic development of any community relies upon its reputation as a safe, viable region in which to locate and do business with supporting infrastructure, community assets and, most importantly, customers willing to walk in the door. However, if customers feel unsafe, they won't come. If the reputation of a region is suspect, businesses won't come."

Unfortunately, this is becoming the reality in too many places around B.C. We cannot continue to act as if the current approach is working. We cannot do the same thing over and over and expect that the result will be a different result after the second time, the tenth time or the 100th time.

We need to see action on this from every level of government, but it can start right here — right here in this House and right here in this chamber. The Minister of Public Safety has himself noted to me that under the Police Act, it is his responsibility to ensure that an effective and adequate level of policing and law enforcement is maintained. Right now I feel many of those police forces are stretched thin.

The minister has also noted that he is responsible for setting the goals, objectives and priorities for law enforcement throughout the province. I hope that he recognizes that solving this crisis needs to be a priority.

[10:10 a.m.]

At the same time, we also know that this is not something that can be solved by policing alone. We need to take a closer look and examine the other gaps in our system that are contributing to this issue, Mr. Speaker. This will mean making better-targeted investments in mental health and addiction supports, making sure that people have the help they need to get well. We also need to work to ensure that when people are released from custody, they are set on a path of success rather than left on our streets with no support and nowhere to run.

There is so much that we can do. In my communities in the Cariboo, here on Vancouver Island and in every corner

of this province, right now, we are failing our communities, we are failing our businesses, and we are failing individuals who need far better supports.

I hope that we can work together to address this issue and create safer, better-supported communities throughout this province. I very much look forward to hearing from the member opposite about how the government will make progress on this goal.

G. Begg: Thank you to the member for Cariboo-Chilcotin for his thoughts on this important issue.

This government believes that residents in the Cariboo-Chilcotin area and, indeed, in every area of our province, must be protected from dangerous repeat offenders — what the member opposite refers to as prolific offenders.

However, I would caution proceeding down the simplistic road that the member for Cariboo-Chilcotin proposes. Quite simply, the approach by this member is simplistic and out of touch with the large body of evidence suggesting that focusing on the underlying causes of crime as opposed to over-incarceration is a more effective deterrent against crime and a much better use of public funds.

This government acknowledges that the residents of the member's and other ridings have observed increased violence and other criminal events not usually seen in some areas of the province. But these are not recent nor new occurrences. They are, I submit, the result of decades of government policies that have neglected the social safety net for vulnerable British Columbians and made these communities more vulnerable to the problems that accompany drug and other addictions.

This government recognizes that while there are individuals for whom detention is warranted, there are a large number of persons who find themselves entangled in the criminal justice system for reasons related to mental health, addictions, homelessness, job training, lack of access to education and systemic overrepresentation in the criminal justice system.

Mr. Speaker, I submit that rather than focusing energy on the incarceration of individuals, the member for Cariboo-Chilcotin abandon the failed policies of the past and acknowledge what many justice partners in North America are discovering: a path towards enlightenment and healing is preferable to perpetuating the social harms that have befallen so many in our communities.

This government, I submit, is simply not interested in throwing simplistic solutions at complex problems. This government welcomes a dialogue with the communities of the Cariboo-Chilcotin and, indeed, all across the province on what community resources are needed to assist the fine residents of his and every other community. What is needed in moments such as these is public education and eradication into the underlying problems that can impact our lives and the lives of our neighbours, not by instilling fear and uncertainty. I have

every confidence that the good people of Cariboo-Chilcotin are wise enough to know the difference.

Jurisdictions across North America, Europe and Australia are recognizing that incarceration of accused persons as a tool of first resort is a proven failure. While I agree that individuals who pose a threat to public safety should be detained or released under strict conditions, we as a society have to think hard about whether we wish to continue to spend public funds on a system that does not lift people up but, rather, I submit, keeps them down.

[10:15 a.m.]

The evolution of the criminal law in Canada through federal legislation and recent decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada reflect a recognition of the need to exercise restraint. It must be noted that the province does not enact criminal laws and, indeed, is bound to abide by federal criminal legislation.

While acknowledging public safety must be upheld, that has been tempered by an approach that reflects a principle of restraint so as to avoid the over-incarceration of individuals, particularly of those from disadvantaged communities, and avoiding prosecution of minor administrative breaches where there are more alternatives to prosecution.

I am proud of this government and that it has supported progressive initiatives in the administration of justice. And it should be noted that tremendous gains have been made in the management of bail over the last three years. Access to justice for individuals across British Columbia has been increased by expanding bail services over weekends and statutory holidays.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, weekday bail in the Provincial Court has been running virtually, enabling persons from more remote communities without courthouses to access the services of Crown counsel and legal aid duty counsel.

“Catch and release” may be a phrase that the Cariboo-Chilcotin member thinks is an appropriate description of his view of the criminal justice system, but it is important that the rule of law be paramount for all British Columbians.

L. Doerkson: I'm not sure that the member opposite heard the words that I spoke of and some of the complexities. He referred to the problem as simplistic and continually focused on what people of Cariboo-Chilcotin were thinking. I'm speaking for a lot of people in British Columbia, and I'd like to just read one of the paragraphs that I read:

“This will mean making better-targeted investments in mental health and addiction supports, making sure that they have the help they need to get well. We also need to work to ensure that when people are released from custody, they are set on a path for success rather than left on our streets with no support and nowhere to run.”

I don't think those are simple challenges. I do thank

the member opposite for his thoughts on the issue, and I appreciate the perspective that he has offered. These improvements are desperately needed. Members of my community are tired. They are tired of living in fear. They are tired of damage to their property, to businesses, and the threat of break-ins to homes and vehicles, and I know the same is being felt in Vancouver, in Victoria, in Prince George and so many other places.

This is such a central area of concern that the Union of B.C. Municipalities recently passed a resolution on the topic. The resolution called on the UBCM to petition the provincial and federal governments to enact criminal justice system changes for stricter penalties to ensure adequate incarceration of prolific criminals, including consistent use of electronic monitoring when released on conditions.

It is obvious that this is an issue felt by very many municipalities and that the resolution is a positive step. But we also know that the measures outlined in the resolution need to come with other systemic changes, with better investments in mental health, social supports, to make sure that people do not commit further crimes, not just because they can't as a result of enhanced policing and surveillance but because they don't want to. They don't feel they need to.

This is a topic of great personal importance to me and one that I hope becomes a greater priority for this government. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to raise this very critical issue and a very complex issue.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Member.

It should be noted that the order of today's statements has been changed at the agreement of the party Whips and the party House Leaders, just in case anyone wondered.

Recognizing the member for Nelson-Creston.

[10:20 a.m.]

COP26

B. Anderson: Thank you, hon. Speaker.

The heat was oppressive, but the smoke was worse. As I drove my Subaru down the summit of the pass, a sense of panic welled up inside me. We had experienced smoky summers before, but I had never seen anything this bad. It was impacting people's physical and mental health, including my own.

A Nelson-based doctor has captured the world's attention by likely being the first physician to diagnose a patient with climate change. Dr. Kyle Merritt gave the controversial diagnosis over the summer, saying that the symptoms of a patient in her 70s who he was seeing were all tied back to one thing. Those effects included heat stroke, dehydration and breathing issues. As he treated the patient, he started thinking about the underlying issues. He ultimately diagnosed her with climate change.

The heat dome also impacted crop production. A few weeks later we would learn that 80 percent of the Lapins cherries in the Creston Valley were lost. This summer, thousands of residents on the east shore, up the valley and across the province were on evacuation alert or order due to forest fires. We lost most of the buildings in the community of Lytton.

Residents in the community of south Canyon had no water this summer for weeks on end. When I attended the south Canyon irrigation district community meeting, an elderly woman was explaining to me how her neighbours were helping truck in water to her home, and she was having to use buckets to flush the toilet and clean. She was completely distraught.

Yesterday, as my colleague and I were carpooling, travelling from our homes in the Kootenays to Victoria, we were shocked by the amount of rainfall. We were rerouted due to the mudslides. En route we received notification from a friend that they were trapped between two mudslides. They were forced to stay in their vehicle overnight. We woke up to the news of rescue efforts of people trapped in their vehicles due to debris flows. Highways are closed due to mudslides across the province, and residents have been evacuated due to floods.

A decade ago, we were still discussing the impacts of climate change as if they were something we were going to experience in the distant future. We are experiencing the impacts of climate change now, at this very moment, but also year after year and season after season, in every community. I would like to thank all the search and rescue officials, first responders, front-line workers and community members for their ongoing efforts.

People in my community are not only concerned about climate change. They are terrified, and so are young people. It is clear we cannot continue on the same path as previous generations if we want a better future for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren.

Part of my mandate as the Premier's special advisor on youth is to develop and chair a provincial youth council to bring forward key challenges facing youth today. The StrongerBC Young Leaders Council will give young people a seat at the table to help set direction for our government's actions.

Last week, COP26 concluded. The summit brought parties from across the globe to accelerate action towards the goals of the Paris Agreement and the UN framework convention on climate change. It was labelled the "Last chance summit." The Glasgow Climate Pact was agreed on amongst all parties at COP26. But even COP president Alok Sharma described the agreement as a fragile win.

It is critical to acknowledge that climate change is not only about the environment. It is about people who are impacted. To quote Elizabeth Marino: "Climate change is redistribution. It alters the timing and intensity of our rains and winds, the humidity in our soils and the sea level around us. As redistribution, climate change is also a mat-

ter of justice. It is about who gains and who loses as change occurs and interventions to moderate change unfold.” Climate change will ultimately be about equity.

One of the most exciting announcements at COP26 came from a Canadian, climate envoy appointee Mark Carney, who announced that bankers, insurers and investors were committing to pledge over \$130 trillion — that’s trillion with a “t” — over the next three decades to put combatting climate change at the centre of their work. This will hopefully be a game-changer.

[10:25 a.m.]

Will this funding also help to smooth the inequities exacerbated by climate change? Companies in jurisdictions that have made clear commitments to reducing emissions and decarbonize are well positioned to attract investment. Because of the work our government has done in B.C., we are well positioned as leaders to attract that investment in our programs and technologies.

Our government’s climate action plan, *CleanBC Roadmap to 2030*, is leading the continent. It will ensure that we are able to meet our emissions targets through accelerated and expanded actions to respond to the urgency of the climate crisis and build a cleaner, stronger economy for everyone.

In fact, B.C. was recognized for our innovative approach to reducing carbon and investing in solutions at COP26. The CleanBC program for industry was awarded the most creative climate solution from the coalition, which is a global alliance of state and regional governments committed to ambitious climate action in line with the Paris Agreement. That is just one program that we should be celebrating.

I am tremendously proud of the work that our government has done to ensure that British Columbia is a leader on the global stage in terms of climate change.

P. Milobar: Well, it’s important for all governments to actually listen to advice and actually take action when it comes to climate change. Imagine if a government was to commission a report, say two years ago, around climate change and the impacts of climate change, a report that would warn about things like heat dome events, a report that would say — I don’t know — that in a heat dome event, there might be up to 100 to 120 people who could lose their lives.

Instead, a heat dome event comes. Yes, it devastated cherry crops. It also killed 600 people in this province. Imagine if that report was ignored, with no action being taken. That is what we see time and again when it comes to climate action plans. They’re a plan for a plan with a plan and no actual tangible deliverable.

When climate action gets questioned — why emissions would keep rising year over year over year — we get told: “Well, it’s a lag in data.” Then we get told: “Well, we’re actually recalculating how emissions have been calculated, and lo and behold, it looks better now.” It doesn’t change what’s

actually happening in our atmosphere. It doesn’t actually change what’s happening in our climate, but governments are able to present a report that makes them feel better, makes it look like they’re taking some action.

If a government is not prepared to take action, reading their own commissioned reports that directly result in the deaths of 600 people, yet wants to talk about the inequalities that get created because of climate change.... If you take a look at who those 600 people were, they were people that couldn’t afford air-conditioning. They were people that didn’t have a social network. They were people that were living in substandard housing. They were people that did not have access to make sure that they were doing the right things to combat the effects of climate change during the heat dome. It ultimately cost them their lives.

Instead of taking action on a two-year-old report over that two years, nothing was done. Instead of taking action to make sure that people knew and warning systems were in place, nothing was done. So talking about climate change and patting one’s own back because they feel like they’re doing something does not actually translate to on the ground, when 600 people die because reports were ignored and actions weren’t taken, and that’s simple to see. It’s simple to see in real terms.

When you think about COVID and think of the tragic number of deaths and all the steps we have taken to combat COVID, to have 600 people, over the space of two to three days, die is simply not acceptable. That’s ignoring the actual impacts of climate change while talking about all the great steps that are being taken to combat climate change and how climate change creates inequalities. It absolutely does. It’s too bad action doesn’t get taken. We’re seeing it play out this weekend. We’re seeing it play out without warning systems. We’re seeing it play out without proper culvert repair and maintenance going on.

[10:30 a.m.]

We’re seeing it play out on the heels of devastating wildfires that have created unstable slopes, knowing that that was going to be the case but hoping that it wouldn’t rain as hard as it was forecast to rain. So we now see people trapped, some for 14 hours still, on highways, desperate to try to get help as temperatures start to drop now in mountain passes, going from rain to freezing conditions with people surrounded by wet surroundings, feeling colder and colder and colder.

We can talk at length about COP26 and an award handed out for a theoretical plan, or we could actually acknowledge the amount of reports and recommendations that have been brought forward over the years — and zero action taken. The results speak for themselves — zero action, 600 people dead in a heat dome event. It could have been preventable.

In fact, Washington state and Oregon.... I’ll probably mix up the two death rates. In the same heat dome event, 90 people died and 95 people died in those two states. Six

hundred in British Columbia, with an ignored report for two years.

I look forward to hearing all of the more wonderful and great marketing plans the government has, but I'd prefer to see actual, tangible action that would literally save hundreds of lives in this province if it was taken seriously by this government.

B. Anderson: In addition to a stronger price on carbon pollution and the CleanBC industrial incentive program, the *CleanBC Roadmap to 2030*, led by our Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and supported by other ministers, identified eight pathways for how we are meeting our emissions reductions: low-carbon energy; transportation; buildings; communities; industry, including oil and gas; the forest bioeconomy; agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries; and negative-emissions technologies. In addition, we are going to continue to work on our climate adaptation preparedness and, in cases like Lytton, community-wide recovery.

In conclusion, with all of the announcements our government has made in the last few weeks, I feel a great sense of hope. But as always, I need to look to my constituents to see if our work is resonating with them. When we announced our forestry intentions paper and, most recently, old-growth deferrals, I looked to local experts in my riding to see if we are on the right scientific and moral path.

Both Nelson-based, PhD-level scientific forestry experts Rachel Holt and Suzanne Simard spoke out publicly through interviews in support of our old-growth deferral announcements. Our government is working in partnership with First Nations to defer harvest of ancient, rare and priority large stands of old growth within 2.6 million hectares of B.C.'s most at-risk old-growth forests. It is critical that resource extraction and development are in alignment with First Nations goals.

I would like to point to another step forward that our government made in the last few weeks by finally putting legislative powers in place to dissolve the resort municipality of Jumbo, a proposed development that was opposed by local First Nations and the community. This ended the 30-year-long effort to ensure that the Qat'muk, in the central Purcell Mountains, remain protected for future generations as an Indigenous-protected and -conserved area overseen by the Ktunaxa.

Finally, on Friday, I was able to speak with a young person in my community who is passionate about climate change, old growth and reconciliation. Going to this meeting, I was unsure how this young person, who had spent time protesting, would feel about our announcements of the old-growth deferrals. He enthusiastically thanked me for the fact that our government is listening to scientists, a sentiment that I was able to pass along to the minister on our ride yesterday from the Kootenays to Victoria.

We know that reducing our GHG emissions and adapt-

ation preparedness is critically important as we focus on supporting people and ensuring an equitable society for all British Columbians today and into the future.

[10:35 a.m.]

SUPPORT FOR B.C. BUSINESSES

D. Davies: I'm pleased to stand here today and talk about supports for B.C. businesses.

We are all aware of, and I cannot imagine, what the last 20 months must have been like for businesses in our communities as they've navigated the uncertainty of the pandemic and the economic upheavals that it has brought with it. As COVID stripped away tourism dollars, limited seating in restaurants among other restrictions, disrupted interprovincial travel and brought unprecedented challenges to our industries dependent on international trade and commerce, we debated the difficult rollout of provincial supports to our businesses desperately struggling to keep their doors open and staff employed.

Although we have made progress, these challenges are far from over for many in our province, and I want to take this opportunity to reflect on the current situation and challenges that many British Columbians are still experiencing today.

This time last year, when our province was in the throgs of the second wave and restrictions were at the height, all of us undoubtedly hoped that this fall would be different. It would be a time of recovery and relief for our province. But it has been very different than that. Last fall, before the vaccine was available, all communities across the province faced similar challenges, and the same level of restrictions were put in place to help mitigate the spread of COVID. But the situation is much different today.

Throughout the Lower Mainland and on Vancouver Island, businesses are beginning to find some solace and are seeing a slow and gradual return to some normalcy. This is not the case for every community across British Columbia. In the Northern Health region, businesses continue to face a fresh round of circuit breaker restrictions but can no longer depend on the original supports and grants that were put in place throughout the province when the original circuit breaker restrictions were announced.

Despite assertions that supports are still available to these businesses today, the province's doors seem to have closed now on many businesses that are reaching out for help. For instance, the circuit breaker grant closed June 4, the small business recovery grant closed July 2, and the launch online grant ended September 30. And although there is a digital bootcamp available for small businesses, this will do little to provide immediate relief that the businesses desperately need today.

Prior to the availability of the vaccine, COVID impacted every single business in every community at the same time. And our health response and resulting supports for businesses at that time were as universal as the

pandemic itself was. But now that there is a more regionalized response, which is what we're seeing, in place to address the situation in each individual health authority, so, too, should the economic supports be regionalized. It's that simple.

It's not enough to assume that because supports were once available, these businesses now have the runway to stay afloat, because that is not the reality we're facing today. That is certainly not the reality we are hearing in the north and communities throughout the Interior. Even in regions of our province where businesses are experiencing reduced restrictions, many are still barely managing to stay afloat as they continue to face labour shortages and reduced revenue. In regions where the restrictions are even worse, this new wave of circuit breaker measures, without supports, could be the final nail in the coffin for many of our businesses, on top of the ones that have already closed.

One business owner in Fort St. John told me recently: "It will only be a matter of time before businesses like ours close its doors due to bankruptcy or ownership exhaustion." Ownership exhaustion — working around the clock, remortgaging homes on top of just the sheer stress of being a business owner trying to imagine what tomorrow might bring. Ownership exhaustion.

[10:40 a.m.]

That same owner told me they've never had to lay off staff before the pandemic, but they are now looking at having to do it for a third time in the last couple of years. It's not enough to tell these businesses that the province will be monitoring the situation. What are we waiting for?

You can ask any MLA in our health region, and they can provide you with hundreds of examples of business that have made it very clear that the time for waiting and monitoring is over. The need for support is imminent. Otherwise, we will see further permanent closures in businesses and the further losses of jobs in our more rural and northern communities.

These businesses are doing their part to help prevent the spread of COVID by abiding by the circuit breaker restrictions, and they are losing crucial revenue because of it. It's time that we show them that Victoria, that this place, is listening to our rural communities and that help will be there for them when they need it. I am urging the government to reopen circuit breaker supports for struggling businesses, especially the ones in the north, so that we don't have to see them close their doors for good.

These are the businesses that support our people, support our communities' clubs, support our communities' sporting groups and really are a crucial part of the fabric that makes up what our communities are. We need to stand up and support our communities.

B. Bailey: Thank you to the member opposite.

The recent release of Stats Canada's labour force survey contains some good news. The labour force survey for October solidifies B.C.'s position as leading Canada's eco-

nomics recovery, with another 10,400 jobs added throughout the province last month. The B.C. vaccine card has created stability in our economy, allowing businesses to remain open while reassuring British Columbians as we gradually return to normal.

B.C. has the second-lowest unemployment rate, after Manitoba, at 5.6 percent, and we continue to lead all provinces with a job recovery rate of 101.9 percent. There are now 51,000 more British Columbians employed than at the start of the pandemic. That's a direct result of people, businesses, communities working together through these tough times.

However, the effects of the pandemic will continue to be felt for many months. As we've done since the beginning of this pandemic, our government will be there to support people and businesses as we build back a strong recovery for everyone.

Our job recovery rate regionally continues to be strong, led by the Thompson-Okanagan at 107.6 percent. Other notable job recovery rates are Prince George at 107.1 percent; Vancouver Island, 105.8 percent; the Cariboo, 105 percent; Kootenays at 100.3; the Lower Mainland at 100.9; Vancouver, 101.4; and North Coast-Nechako at 100 percent.

Our government remains committed to lifting people disproportionately affected by this pandemic. There's a lot of talk among economists, currently, about letters. Will the recovery be a U, a V, an L or a K? A K-shaped recovery tells the story that those at the top experience economic gains while those in the middle and in the lower sections experience economic decline. This is what we're fighting against.

I got to do some of that work in my role as Parliamentary Secretary for Technology and Innovation. I was asked to redesign the innovator skills initiative, or ISI, and consulted with more than 30 stakeholder groups. We listened to both equity-seeking groups and to businesses. The redesign reflects this.

Through a partnership between the B.C. government and Innovate B.C., Mitacs and the Information and Communications Technology Council, or ICTC, 3,000 people from underrepresented groups will have a chance to get their first job in the tech sector through this ISI program. The program provides \$10,000 grants to businesses and non-profits to help underrepresented people get their first job in the tech sector or in a tech-enabled role.

[10:45 a.m.]

The program also helps businesses and non-profits facing skills shortages to grow and expand. As in years prior, the program supports businesses to hire students for paid internships and co-op roles, but in listening to businesses and participants, we have now opened the program to people that have industry-recognized credentials — micro-credential certifications such as the digital marketing or web design certifications.

The province's investment of \$15 million is being supplemented by Mitacs and ICTC, bringing the total invest-

ment of this program to \$29 million. Grants will help cover a new employee's salary for a four-month period, and the program offers valuable paid work experience that can lead people to long-term employment in this sector.

Grants are available to B.C. businesses of all sizes, and applications are open at the Innovate B.C. website. But apply soon. I understand it's getting full.

In the October labour market report, I was also pleased to see that employment among B.C.'s Indigenous population is 10.6 percent above pre-pandemic levels, and unemployment rate for people of colour continues to decline in B.C., now sitting at 1.5 percentage points lower than the national average.

These positive results tell us a story. They tell us that our stable, inclusive approach to dealing with the pandemic is working. By providing more supports per capita for people in businesses than any other province, workers and business owners are confident about our vision for the future, which doesn't leave anyone behind.

On a last note, as we approach the holiday season, please consider shopping locally to support our B.C. businesses. Gift certificates to restaurants, theatre, attractions are all great gifts, and they contribute to supporting a sector that has been hard hit, allowing us to be a part of the economic recovery.

D. Davies: Thanks to the member for Vancouver–False Creek for her comments — unfortunately, missed a lot of what I was saying in my comments. We've been talking about.... You know, the member can paint a picture of recovery and quote the labour force survey, talk about stability in the economy. The reality is the regionalized piece of this is what we're not seeing on the ground. The supports are not in place to support the areas within the areas that are under the circuit breakers.

As I've outlined also in my previous statement, there is, without a doubt, an urgent necessity for additional regional supports, and it won't be enough just to reintroduce previous circuit breaker grants. We need to re-evaluate, we need to revise the supports, and we need to meet the specific needs of the businesses that are impacted the most within those regions.

As I iterated before, it's not enough to simply assume that these businesses had access to the first round of grants, because they did not. Many communities in north-eastern British Columbia and along the whole eastern border share ties with Alberta communities, and their businesses have been locked out of both B.C. and Alberta supports as a result.

In fact, I spoke to a few business owners in Fort St. John who are ineligible to receive the B.C. grants because of partial ownership in Alberta, but they are paying taxes here in British Columbia. One of the local businesses was completely excluded from access to B.C. grants because one of the owners had just moved to Grande Prairie. There are countless examples of this from B.C. businesses located

near the Alberta border — businesses that now have no hope whatsoever of receiving supports from the province they operate but pay taxes into.

We also have to consider the industries and the communities that are impacted. Businesses in the Peace region, for example, depend heavily on tourism for their revenue and will not see a return to revenue until we see a full return to international travel and tourism, which could be months or even years away.

To deliver supports that meet the needs of our businesses, proper consultation is absolutely critical. Government needs to engage with businesses impacted by the circuit breaker measures so that we can develop a better understanding of the barriers that keep them from accessing the supports and getting the help that they need. Government should not only reintroduce but also redesign the supports program so that we can ensure that businesses across the province receive the help that they need to get on the road to real recovery for the future of their businesses.

I want to quote the member for Vancouver–False Creek. She said: "Our government will be there to support." It's time for this government to show that they will, indeed, be there for our businesses.

[10:50 a.m.]

UNDERSTANDING DECRIMINALIZATION AND HARM REDUCTION

H. Yao: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to allow me to interpret my private member's statement in a language more familiar to the members of my community in this chamber.

謝謝您，議長，我很高興有機會讓我在省議事廳裡用華裔社區熟悉的語言，讓我們社區成員更容易理解。

Recently, through listening to my constituents sharing their concerns and through various forms of media, I have learned there is a lot of misinformation of decriminalization in my community.

最近，通過聽取省民分享他們的關切以及不同媒體的報導，我了解到在我們社區裡有很多錯誤信息在流傳。

Let me start by saying that addiction is a health care issue, not a criminal one.

我先要表達，上癮是一個醫療問題，而不是刑事問題。

Parents try to do whatever they can to help their children have a healthy childhood and a lifetime of happiness.

所有父母都盡最大的努力，去幫助他們的孩子健康成長和擁有快樂的人生。

One of the greatest fears I have is when my child faces an overwhelming challenge but is too ashamed or fearful to reach out to me, my wife, her loved one, or even the community, for help.

我最擔心的是，當我的孩子面臨重大挑戰時，我不希望她因為羞愧或害怕，而不敢向我，我的妻子、其他親人或社區尋求幫助。

When my daughter grows up and explores the world, like all other children, she will inevitably have new experiences — some good, some bad, some that teach her about herself and some that leave a mark.

像所有其他孩子一樣，我的女兒成長時會碰到不同的生活經歷。有的好，有的壞，有的會讓她更了解自己，也有的會在她的生命中留下痕跡。

Like other parents, her mother and I want to be there for her.

當他碰到不同的生活經歷時，我和她的母親都希望能在她身邊，給予關懷與支持。

We'll do whatever we can to support her as she faces life's challenges, addresses issues, reconciles her relationships and betters herself from the experiences.

遇到挑戰時，我們將盡力支持她努力走出困境、面對難題、修復關係並從經驗中成長。

However, because of shame and fear, she may choose to hide the situation, which may slowly erode her self-esteem, quality of life and, most of all, her happiness. This will potentially become either an irreconcilable problem or cause irreversible harm to herself or others around her.

羞恥和恐懼可能迫使她隱瞞所面對的問題。若問題得不到解決，將會奪去她的快樂，影響她的生活品質，同時侵蝕她的自尊心。不僅會對她造成難以挽回的傷害，還會傷害關心她的人。

There is a lot of shame and fear associated with addiction. Unfortunately, many people who struggle with addiction suffer in silence and in isolation.

很不幸的是，許多受癮癮困擾的人因為羞恥和恐懼，在孤寂和隔絕中掙扎。

With six British Columbians dying each day of toxic drugs, it is crucial to help people with addiction, to reduce shame and fear while helping them access life-saving services and improving their quality of life.

卑詩省每天有六人死於摻假非法藥物，最重要的是幫助受癮癮困擾的人減少羞恥和恐懼，以及獲得醫療急救和改善生活的服務。

That's why our government is committed to helping the vulnerable members of our community to have access to support their needs. This is the reason why our provincial government is applying to the federal government for an exception to section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

這就是為什麼我們政府致力於幫助我們社區弱勢群體獲得需要的支持。

這也正是省政府正在申請《管製藥物及物質法》第 56 條豁免的原因。

Decriminalization helps our government focus on prevention and harm reduction and helps people with addictions to access supportive services.

非刑事化有助於我們的政府專注於預防和減少傷害，並幫助受癮癮困擾者獲得支持服務。

Around the world where jurisdictions have established decriminalization, there's no increase in substance use at the population level.

在其他已經非刑事化的地區，並沒有導致藥物使用增加。

We remain focused on preventing problematic substance use, minimizing harm for those who are using, ensuring that people with addictions have access to treatment and recovery options.

[10:55 a.m.]

我們在加強預防非法藥物使用及降低非法藥物對大眾的傷害，並保障癮癮困擾者治療和康復機會。

I also want to emphasize that decriminalization is not legalization.

我想強調，非刑事化並不是合法化。

Decriminalization is to remove criminal sanctions for people who have a small amount of drugs for personal uses.

非刑事化是取消對擁有少量個人使用非法藥物者面臨刑事後果。

Police will continue to focus on interdicting drug traffickers. Organized crime, gang activity and drug trafficking and other drug-related offences will remain illegal.

警方將繼續打擊非法藥販和有組織犯罪。幫派活動、販賣非法藥物和其他相關的罪行仍是違法的。

Illicit substances will still be illegal and not sold in stores.

非法藥物還是不能合法在商店出售。

Like all parents, I, too, want to minimize the chance for my daughter to develop an addiction.

Like all parents in B.C., I, too, want the best for my child.

我跟卑詩省的所有父母一樣，也想盡量減少女兒上癮的機會。

我跟卑詩省的所有父母一樣，也希望我的孩子擁有最好的未來。

With decriminalization, those who struggle with addiction in silence and isolation due to fear and shame will be able to reach out for support they deserve and need. Decriminalization is a vital step forward in removing barriers to treatment and connecting people with supportive services without fear of prosecution.

讓我們一起支持卑詩省內需要幫助的人脫離恐懼和羞恥同時得到需要的服務和治療。

而非刑事化將會是重要的一步。

[Mandarin text supplied by H. Yao.]

Deputy Speaker: For members' information, the statement is provided in both Mandarin and English. The member has assured the House that what was said in Mandarin is the same as what was said in English, so you all are

aware. If you'd like a copy, of course, the member has also made those available.

All right. Okay, we're good.

T. Halford: I want to take this opportunity to thank the member for Richmond South Centre for his words. He said something in both languages, which I applaud that he took the time to do in this House. It's that all parents want the best for their children, and I fundamentally agree with that.

I think one of the heartwarming things is actually I got the opportunity to speak with the member on the ferry, when we first came over here last December. He was going through something I had gone through six years earlier. He was trying to calm a baby down on a rocking ferry, and he was doing laps, which I smiled at. It brought back I won't say good memories, but they were memories. We share that together.

I appreciate the opportunity to once again speak to the devastating overdose crisis that continues to plague our province. British Columbia's long-running public health emergency has taken over 1,500 lives in this year alone — a staggering 24 percent increase over the same period from last year. Month after month, hundreds of families across the province are forced to grieve the loss of loved ones who have fallen victim to this crisis.

It's incredibly disheartening that every month we continue to have to stand in this Legislature and speak about rising overdose deaths. But more importantly, we continue to see a mental health and addiction system that is lacking resources, and we do not have it comprehensive or funded enough to help actually end the cycle of addiction. Immediate action is needed to expand pathways to recovery so people can get the help they need, when they need it.

The most recent coroners report revealed both August 2021 and September 2021 saw the largest number of suspected deaths ever recorded in those respective months. These are staggering numbers, but behind each number is a human life. They are a father. They are a mother. They are a sister. They are a brother. Sadly, we're on pace to break last year's record.

We must redouble our efforts. It's clear an all-hands-on-deck approach is needed. As B.C.'s application for decriminalization is in review by the federal government, there are many more pressing steps that can be undertaken to help to save lives today.

[11:00 a.m.]

It's important to look at every tool in the toolbox, but decriminalization won't achieve the objective if government does not ensure that proper health supports are in place in order to culminate such a significant shift in policy.

We need a seismic overhaul of how we are looking at treatment in British Columbia. Right now it's a patchwork, but we have to ensure that the system is built for those who need access to these services. British Columbia's mental

health and addiction services were already stretched and underfunded before the pandemic, and this system continues to struggle with the additional demand.

People in need of immediate help are now not only facing deadlier street drugs, but they're also facing months and months of wait-lists. A lack of withdrawal management and bed availability — and unaffordable, privately run services — means that we remain in a crisis. We remain in a way where we cannot provide services for those who need it, for those who are struggling with addiction. All members of this House can agree that more needs to be done to ensure that no one dies while on a wait-list, but I've yet to see any evidence of that urgency.

Earlier this year our caucus asked for the Select Standing Committee on Health to be activated so that all parties can work together on immediate actions to prevent further tragedy. We repeatedly talked, during private members' time, about a collaborative approach and the urgency the public health emergency needs, yet there continues to be a lack of action. This issue should not be about what side of the aisle the idea came from. It should be about taking every immediate step possible to save lives.

I do not want to have to continue standing here month after month, talking about more lives lost to this deadly crisis. However, I will continue to push for greater supports, in a system that ensures no one falls through the cracks, until the day the public health crisis is declared over.

Let's get to work, all hands on deck, to ensure that this becomes a reality and that we can actually save lives in this province.

H. Yao: Thank you, member opposite, for your kind words and understanding.

[Mandarin was spoken.]

We understand that decriminalization alone will not solve the illicit drug poisoning crisis. Our provincial government is also tackling the crisis from every angle.

[N. Letnick in the chair.]

我們知道，非刑事化是公共醫療危機的其中一項處理方案。這也是減少污名化的重要一步。我們的省政府也正在從各個角度解決這一危機。

We've announced \$132 million for new treatment and recovery services across the province. B.C. is doubling the number of youth treatment beds, as well as adding more than 100 adult treatment and recovery beds, and 195 more treatment beds are coming, through Budget 2021.

卑詩省已經宣布為新的治療康復服務投入1.32億元。現正在將青少年治療床位的數量增加一倍，以及100多個成人治療和康復床位。2021年撥款中還將新增195張治療床位。

Since 2017, our government has doubled the number

of supervised consumption sites. These sites have had two million visits and zero deaths.

且自2017年起，我們的政府將監督用藥服務站的數量增加了一倍。現有的服務站已使用200萬次，且在監督下無人死亡。

Access has been significantly expanded through rapid access to addiction care clinics in all health regions so that more people can access the care they need, where and when they need it.

通過各衛生局快速醫療，令有需要者獲得服務的機會大大增加，更多人可以及時得到護理。

Following Dr. Bonnie Henry's order, registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses are allowed to prescribe controlled drugs and substances to reach people who have been traditionally underserved.

亨利醫師指示，允許註冊護士和註冊精神科護士開出管制藥物處方，以幫助那些平時難以得到服務的人。

B.C.-prescribed safer supply will enable regional health authorities to begin offering a wider range of medications as safer alternatives to toxic street drugs such as fentanyl products and stimulants. Our government is investing \$22.6 million over the next three years to support health authorities in implementing this policy.

我們的政府還提供了獲得更安全處方供應的機會。卑詩省的安全處方供應將使地區衛生當局提供包括芬太尼等藥物，作為街頭非法藥物的更安全替代品。政府將在未來三年投入2260萬元至各衛生局。

[11:05 a.m.]

Furthermore, our government will introduce an evidence-based public information campaign that will be developed for the public, including parents, that will address how to talk about these topics, health and safety issues related to drug use, and key differences between decriminalization, legalization and safe supply.

此外，省政府將以醫學理據向公眾傳達訊息，討論與癮癮藥物相關的健康和安全問題。以及非刑事化、合法化和安全供應之間的區別。

[Mandarin text provided by H. Yao.]

Deputy Speaker: Thank you for your bilingual delivery of your message.

Hon. J. Whiteside: I ask that the House consider proceeding with Motion 19, standing in the name of the member for West Vancouver–Capilano.

Deputy Speaker: Members, unanimous consent is required for the House to proceed to Motion 19 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

Private Members' Motions

MOTION 19 — ROLE OF PARENTS IN CARE OF CHILDREN

K. Kirkpatrick:

[Be it resolved that this House recognize the importance of parents being directly involved in the care of a child.]

Shocking. Distressing. Devastating. These are words of angry parents when they heard the NDP government's recent announcement to claw back direct funding by 2025 for children with autism. When it comes to the well-being and care of children, especially children with support needs, parents should be — they must be — directly involved at the centre of that care. These families, already marginalized and vulnerable, have been struggling in a system without adequate and equitable support.

Thankfully, they have found comfort in their access to the autism funding currently in place to pay for supports such as certified behavioural analysts and occupational therapists, to name a few, to help promote skill development for their children. In most cases, this involves spending a long time to vet and hire the right service team for their child.

But now these well-established relationships and resources are being taken away by the NDP government. The official opposition has received numerous emails from parents and advocates expressing serious concerns for the lack of transparency, information and consultation regarding this policy and these funding changes. Families are heartbroken, and in the words of a group: "This decision is downright unethical."

This is not an opposition issue. Every MLA in this House has heard from these same parents, their own constituents, about the stress and anxiety this policy has caused them. We must understand the profound impacts these changes will bring to the autism and broader disability community. During the pandemic, this government's inability to provide funding promptly has already burdened these families as they lost respite support and vital services. When autism funding is taken away, for many children, their world will be turned upside down, as transpositioning is one of the most difficult things for them.

Here's what Koryn Heisler said from North Vancouver: "I am a parent to three children, two of whom have an autism diagnosis. We feel like we are swimming with our heads just above water, one wave away from drowning. Taking our supports away would be pushing us under the water."

I understand the need to support all families with children with disabilities. What I'm failing to understand is why the government needs to take away a model that's working for families with children with autism in order to support other and all children, rather than building on the existing process and system.

This is just one of the many letters we've received from impacted families. There are so many questions that remain unanswered. They're asking this government: who decides the needs of a child, and how qualified are they to do so? Are there enough qualified service providers who have the knowledge and therapies in this new hub model? How much funding is being provided for the new hub model? Will at-home services still be an option? These are just some of the questions going unanswered by these families.

[11:10 a.m.]

Families and service providers are asking for clear understanding, information and consultation. They want and rightfully deserve a respectful dialogue with government. A top-down approach takes away a parent's ability to decide on care for their own child and is creating chaos and confusion.

These distraught parents have been working tirelessly to improve the lives of their children. They know their children best and should not be removed from the decision-making process. They want choices and direct involvement, not the current government's proposed cookie-cutter approach to supports.

It's time for the NDP to show some respect, listen to these families, and stop the clawback of autism funding.

K. Paddon: "Be it resolved that this House recognize the importance of parents being directly involved in the care of a child." When I read this motion, I thought of how, so many times, in various front-line roles of advocacy and support, I have heard or worked closely with families of children with disabilities, and this was the crux. This was the theme. Parents were involved, but their voices were not heard. Their choices were limited. Their options were non-existent.

The requirements themselves were barriers. I sat across from parents whose child did not have the right kind of diagnosis so did not have access to service. I have planned with parents of youth whose needs were virtually identical to friends receiving autism supports, but they received none because they didn't yet have a diagnosis. I have worked with adults who struggled with employment because they were not supported with certain needs or skills as youth because of the stigma associated with their diagnosis. I have heard from parents that they can't find help, that they're overwhelmed, that managing staff is a full-time job on top of a full-time job.

I have heard from parents and youth that they need supports sooner. I have seen families, marriages and careers fall apart as the pressures and demands of unsupported needs of a child limit the choices and options for parents, children and families.

This is why I'm so encouraged that we are listening to parents when it comes to ensuring accessible, affordable child care and education, and, most recently, that we are listening to parents and the B.C. Representative for Chil-

dren and Youth in developing and delivering a new needs-based approach so that every child and youth gets the services they need, when they need it, up till the age of 19 and in every part of our province. No child or youth will be turned away from services or support if they have needs.

The community living movement was built on the voices and work of parents, and this is the next evolution. Recognizing the importance of parents being directly involved in the care of a child means listening to parents and families when they tell us that timeliness and access are critical to their child's development, that it shouldn't matter what the condition is called. If a need can be supported, it ought to be.

Children and youth and their families deserve a wrap-around system that will meet them where they are and not require parents to become accountants, employers, subcontractors or recruiters, or even be forced to run their own businesses in order to support their children. Parents shouldn't have to be scared of not being able to access services based on where they live or the name of a diagnosis.

Let's talk a moment about fear. As parents, we recognize that change can be a threat. From what I've heard from parents of children and youth with disabilities over the past decades and the past weeks, any changes to services are scary, especially after spending so long in a system where scarcity exists. I was there, and I saw when families had to justify as services and funding were brutally slashed with devastating and life-changing consequences.

While we know that some parents are finally seeing a light for their child, we also hear that some are scared that their voices will not be heard and that it will cost their children. You know what? Unfortunately, some will try to capitalize on that fear, for their own purposes. But I want to acknowledge it, and I want to address, with facts, the fear I'm hearing.

To parents worried about funding that they receive disappearing, the funding that families receive now through an individualized autism funding program will continue to be available until the spring of 2025, and family connections hub operators will work with the family to ensure that therapies, supports and services will continue helping their children work towards their goals.

[11:15 a.m.]

What about the people you chose? What about the people your children trust? We've heard from families how important it is to have a choice of therapists, and there will be opportunities for current therapists and providers to be part of the new system. In the new approach, there may be opportunities for providers to subcontract into the hub to support a child or youth with whom they have a relationship.

What about funding? Our government has a proven track record of supporting children and youth with support needs. Budget 2021 included a \$13 million increase for direct services to children with support needs and to their families, and included over \$4 million for staff re-

cruitment and retention. As we begin regional and province-wide implementation, there will be new investments to support family connections hubs.

There is so much more information than I can include in five minutes, and there's more coming, as we learn, hear more and roll out a system that doesn't leave any of our kids behind. I'm grateful to be hearing from parents — happy, worried, anxious, hopeful. All of them are working to ensure that their child has what they need: a system that puts the child and their needs at the centre.

That is a system that can best support our children and youth. That is a system I am so glad we are building.

J. Tegart: I'm pleased to stand and speak on the motion: "Be it resolved that this House recognize the importance of parents being directly involved in the care of a child."

I don't think anyone in this House would argue against the fact that parents and families deserve to be directly involved in the care of their children. Our families have been, and always will be, the greatest support networks our children can rely on, the networks that understand the specific needs of their children. Families develop plans and strategies over years of daily interaction with their children to provide them with the supports and care they need.

No member here would disagree with the incredible role our public and private institutions play in the growth and development of our next generation of British Columbians — most notably, our education system. B.C. is blessed to have one of the strongest education systems in the world, supported by the tens of thousands of teachers and support staff who have dedicated their professional lives to providing our children with the best possible education and care.

Of course, in a system that is responsible for more than 600,000 students, there is no one-size-fits-all approach that can accommodate the learning needs of every student in British Columbia. Parents have the right to enrol their children in the educational institution that meets their children's specific learning needs.

When we're talking about education, we as a province have a fundamental duty to ensure that families have the most freedom of choice and accessibility possible. When we implement changes that seem to do the opposite, it's time for us to step back and rethink our actions. For example, I have received hundreds of calls, letters and emails from concerned parents and families who strongly oppose the proposed changes to the enrolment boundaries for our independent distributed learning schools.

As we've been told, starting in the 2022-2023 school year, public and independent online school authorities can only operate within their district, unless granted special permission from the Ministry of Education to cross-enrol from another district or authority. This will mean that students not currently residing within school boundaries will no longer be able to attend their chosen schools via online learning.

One of the greatest benefits of IDL has been that enrolment is not confined to the traditional boundaries of schools and school districts. In rural ridings like mine, where students can find themselves hundreds or even thousands of kilometres away from the school that best meets their learning needs, this flexibility has been invaluable. These proposed changes have come with little notification and almost no opportunity for public input or consultation with the families that will be most affected.

[11:20 a.m.]

These changes not only limit the scope of IDL schools available to children with special learning needs but also reduce the freedom and independence of parents to pick the school that will best care for their children.

Government has a duty to improve the quality of our educational institutions, but we must also recognize changes that restrict the availability of learning programs and strip away independence and choice from parents and families.

I urge government to rethink their decision, pause on the proposed changes to IDL and offer families the opportunity for consultation that they are asking for so that we can ensure we are giving parents the tools and the freedom they need to provide their children with the best possible education and care.

R. Leonard: It's simply a self-evident truth that it's important for parents to directly be involved in the care of their children. More important to this House is that government support our most vulnerable children and families. That is accomplished by building an inclusive system of supports and services for all special needs children and their families so that all parents can be the best that they can be, and their children can all grow up to be best British Columbians that they can be.

For parents and caregivers raising special needs children, coping alone to meet their challenges is stressful and exhausting, and when they face barriers to having those challenges recognized and are denied supports and services available to others, frustration and despair is their daily bread. Yet they persevere, because we're talking about their beautiful children. This has been the world of families with neurodiverse and other special needs children.

In 2019, I had the opportunity and privilege to serve on the Children and Youth all-party committee. We all heard from families and service providers across B.C. about the system of supporting neurodiverse special needs children and families. From Terrace to Fort St. John, from Prince George to Castlegar, across the Island and the Lower Mainland — it did not matter where we were — the challenges and gaps, the failures and the unmet need cried out for change after the previous government had turned a blind eye.

Carolyn Braun, in Kelowna, bravely shared her family's heartbreaking journey with their son, who at that point was in grade 7. She recognized that there was something

different about her son as an infant, but her concerns were discounted. Year after year brought new challenges — stopping speaking; behaviour problems in school; enduring parents trying to get him kicked out of school; waiting for assessments and diagnoses, like oppositional defiance disorder, sensory processing, ADHD; and then paying for reassessments to consider an autism diagnosis, all while watching her intelligent boy failing class, suffering mental anguish and becoming suicidal.

What was her ask? Ms. Braun said: “At the school and within our community, if we had a collaborative program set up where we could all sit down as a group — pediatricians, teachers, behavioural interventionists, child psychiatrists and us, as parents — we could work together to find the best solutions for the individual child. I think that would be the best approach.”

In Surrey, Tina Patterson, with a clever, creative son who has autism spectrum disorder, described the assessment process and getting support services as “an uphill battle that no family should have to face when trying to support one’s child. Thankfully, we had the education, financial resources and moxie to advocate for our son. Sadly, this is not the case for all children in B.C.”

She also highlighted how parents are left to their own devices waiting for a diagnosis. She said: “The process of survival and endurance, as parents juggle commitments striving to support their child, is in fact a burden that is not equally distributed within our system.”

How did we get to this devastating point? The Representative for Children and Youth at the time of the previous government’s 2001 deep, draconian cuts to child services concluded that the cuts “put the most vulnerable children, youth and families at even greater risk and stand in direct contradiction with MCFD’s intention to increase capacity of families to care for their children.”

[11:25 a.m.]

The all-party committee recommended changes to better serve the needs of neurodiverse special children, and the ministry, in its own review, with some 1,500 submissions, agreed. In fact, out of the gate in 2017 and every year since, our government has been increasing investments to provide more service to better support children with special needs.

We sought out the lived experience of families and service providers to guide the way forward. Today we are set to open doors to meet all children’s functional needs sooner, so parents can access supports before, during and after receiving a diagnosis, and closer to home. We are doing it in a collaborative way so that parents are no longer left stranded to find their own way to their child’s and, indeed, their entire family’s success.

T. Shypitka: Thank you to the member for West Vancouver–Capilano for the motion: “Be it resolved that this House recognize the importance of parents being directly involved in the care of a child.”

Public consultation is a key part of the democratic process. It gives people the ability to actively participate in the process government undertakes when making significant decisions, especially decisions that directly impact them and their children. It’s troubling when that consultation doesn’t happen, because parents should be directly involved in the care of their children.

Although this government prides itself on providing services for all, last year they slashed vital funding from IDL schools, which provide distance learning programs for some of British Columbia’s most vulnerable youth. We heard the member for Chilliwack-Kent, a few moments ago, talk about a proven track record. That is indeed the case, but not a very good one.

Fast-forward to 2021, and this government is at it again. Now they have plans to claw back funding from a program that is currently assisting thousands of families across the province. This time they’re proposing sweeping changes to autism funding, which are poorly received by families throughout B.C. What’s worse, this government didn’t bother to consult with the families and stakeholders that are directly impacted by these immense changes.

We have seen in the past that a one-size-fits-all approach rarely works, especially for families living in remote areas in the province. In creating a hub model, as the government is doing, you remove the flexibility that parents in rural areas desperately need. We heard the member for Chilliwack-Kent talk about options. These are not what this model represents.

In areas such as my riding of Kootenay East, where we already encounter a lack of resources, travelling hours to reach a hub for these services will only add pressure to an already stressful situation. I have had numerous parents reach out to discuss these changes, as this government has left them with more questions than answers.

A parent from Sparwood asked: “Will these new service hubs be available to small rural communities? Driving an hour or more, and sometimes a lot more than an hour, for weekly appointments would be too much of a strain on our family.” Parents have benefited from the freedom to choose service providers in their area, and now this government is asking them to scrap the services in place and drive hours away on a regular basis.

There has been an outpouring of criticism to this change, and thousands of parents from across British Columbia have made their voices heard. Yet time and time again, we have this government announce a major overhaul to a system in place with minimal contact and consultation with the public. Consultation is important, because these families have spent years putting in place a team that will help their child thrive. Moreover, these children and service providers have spent years building relationships. By taking these relationships away, government is harming these children, rather than helping them.

Parents and children that have fostered strong relationships with their providers are terrified that this change

to remove individualized funding will impede the growth that they are seeing today and create an uncertain future for their children. A parent, this time from northern B.C., suggests that: "Rural northern communities are extremely deficient in a variety of supports. My child needs to click with support providers, or he will shut down and not engage." This government should be taking into consideration the negative consequences this move will have for children across the province.

[11:30 a.m.]

Like many parents throughout the province, I am concerned for the well-being of these children as well as their parents. They have worked tirelessly to ensure their children have the appropriate services in place to help them reach their full potential. Their service providers also play a vital role in helping parents cope with their real-life struggles.

A parent from the Interior writes: "My service provider not only provides trusted therapies for my kids; my service provider also supports me, the parent, as I navigate parenting children with special needs."

When will this government understand that their one-size-fits-all hub model will cause significant issues for children with support needs and negatively affect the parents that work so hard to ensure that their children's needs are met? For example, one parent from my constituency, in Elkford, has four children across the autism spectrum. For her to load up the car on a snowy winter day with her four beautiful children and drive a couple hours, one way, to a hub centre is not only dangerous and impractical but is downright disrespectful.

Clearly, this decision needs to be reversed quickly.

A. Mercier: I'm honoured to stand today in the House and rise to speak to this motion that the House recognizes the importance of parents being directly involved in the care of a child.

We've heard a lot about that today, but I just want to start by saying that nobody knows their children like parents. To be a parent in today's world is so complicated. Parents are so cross-pressured. This is something that I didn't really understand until I had my own kids, which is that being a parent is a full-time job, on top of everything else that you have to do. You have to be a jack of all trades now to parent kids.

The modern world, with all of the pressures of modern life and all of the pressures facing young people and kids — and, frankly, cost pressures on households and the fact that both parents have to work in most cases — means that parents are under a lot of pressure. The role of the government.... The government needs to support parents. The government needs to be there to help parents. But that can't be an excuse to step back and just abdicate responsibility and to delegate all of the government's role to parents.

We have heard from many members in this House, from their own experience, and the member for Chilliwack-Kent today of the pressure parents are under when they become the primary and sole coordinator for their child's care, on top of everything else. The government has a role to play here.

Now, the existing patchwork of support for neurodiverse children isn't working. It's not working for a reason. We heard a lot of criticism about a one-size-fits-all approach by government. I want to talk a bit about how we got here and a one-size-fits-all approach that the previous government took, which was draconian cuts.

There is an excellent book right now written by a former colleague of many members of this House, George Abbott, called *Big Promises, Small Government: Doing Less with Less in the B.C. Liberal New Era*. It's an excellent road map into how not to govern and how to get to where we are. I just want to read out some quotes here from the book for *Hansard* on how we got to where we are.

In the book, which is based off of George Abbott's PhD thesis from his time as a minister in the Campbell government, he says the representative for child and youth 2001 annual report, released after the 2002 provincial budget, is devoted almost entirely to his concerns regarding the 23 percent, \$360 million cut to the Ministry of Children and Family Development's operating budget. Among the cuts highlighted by the advocate were \$185.7 million from child protection and family development; \$34.5 million from youth justice, youth services and child and youth mental health; and \$15.6 million from early childhood development and special needs services for children and youth.

To implement the cut, and I'm quoting here: "Among these steps were elimination of behavioural support programs for children with autism, termination of taking at-risk children into care after the age of 16, curtailment of the fetal alcohol initiative and closure of the Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre in Burnaby."

[11:35 a.m.]

So we've seen a road map for how not to do things. This is how we got here. What we need to do right now is to make sure that the system is supporting parents and that the government is there to support parents as they need it. That's what we are doing by listening to parents.

I'm not going to breach the confidentiality or sanctity of my office, but I've spoken to many parents who have come in with children with autism who are at their wit's end having to coordinate the service delivery and who don't have the right diagnosis to get the service they need. The new framework for children and youth with support needs is going to fill a much-needed gap, and it's going to add services. It is going to add support for 8,300 families in this province.

Every child and youth deserves the support and services they need to live a full, happy and healthy life and to reach their goals. Not having the right diagnosis should not be a barrier to access.

We need not go back to the road we took in the path

and the road that got us here, which is draconian cuts and a patchwork of services. We need to build. It takes longer, and it takes time to build up than it does to tear things down, as we've seen from the experience in this House and in this province.

D. Ashton: For a government that prides itself on being open and transparent, for me and for many others, its actions, especially for which I'm about to speak, actually show the opposite. For the past four years, I have seen a government that sometimes, to me, doesn't really seem to understand the needs of all British Columbians. Rather, they make big announcements, seemingly without appropriate and inclusive consultation, and appear to have a very limited idea on how their plans will affect the majority.

Recently British Columbians got to see this through the decision regarding concerns from parents and stakeholders about the changes to individualized funding for children with autism. It appears to me that this government is set to pick winners and losers, damn the torpedoes, by advancing their government-knows-best agenda. They are going to see the results of taking away a parent's choice, especially when it deals with a child who needs additional support and extra help to meet their challenges.

Governments are elected to implement policies that make the lives of all British Columbians better, not just a few. Changes must be preceded by direct and broad consultation for all that are going to be affected, something, to me, that does not appear to happen with this bill. For me, a major concern is that this government feels that appropriate consultation is not needed, and they go ahead and announce the changes and implement the changes without actually talking to the people that are affected by the changes that are forthcoming.

This change is going to adversely affect thousands of families, and, more importantly, the current and future lives of the children that the government says it's going to help. To me, this is a travesty. According to Kaye Banez, the president of the board of directors for Autism B.C., her group "only had half an hour conversation with the Minister of Children and Family Development in the days leading up to the announcement." For a group that has long been advocating for support and has been working with families who need that support each and every day, how is a half-hour conversation enough?

Parents have the right to be involved in making decisions for the care of their children, and some have spent years trying to find the right team of individuals that can help them. With this change in policy, the hard work put forward by parents and stakeholders will be taken away, and many, many parents and their children will be forced to start over.

Some children have had the opportunity to see the same individuals over a significant period of time, which allows them to be comfortable and to thrive through that setting.

For a government to strip away all that with minimal consultation and to ask them to start over again, to me, is appalling.

Amber Hut, one of the thousands of concerned parents who have signed a petition against the changes, suggests: "We should be keeping the few things that are actually working in this system and fixing what is broken." Instead, we are taking away a model that has worked and asking parents and, especially, the children to start the process over again.

I don't understand that the minister suggests that they will begin speaking to families on how these changes will be administered. Would it not be more logical to have these conversations with stakeholders and parents and the parents of those children affected before you decide a complete and massive overhaul of the system that has worked for so many?

We already know that this decision to rush through the changes of autism funding is creating chaos and confusion for the families, but the most concerning part of this to me is that the changes will negatively affect children who need a stable and consistent environment to reach their full potential.

[11:40 a.m.]

While they should be supporting families that have spent years creating a plan that works for their child, this government is reversing the funding that's allowing them to do that and, instead, asking parents to trust that the government knows best.

A parent from the Interior says: "I currently use my funding at a learning centre because my child is not able to go to a public school. My funding is what makes it possible, and it has been such a success for him. Without the annual funding, I cannot afford the school. Is it still going to be covered? What is going to happen to the schools without this funding?"

Unfortunately, once again, British Columbians are left with more questions than answers. To me, that's not kosher for a government that says it supposedly works for you.

J. Rice: There is an inequity in services delivered for kids who are neurodiverse or have a disability. Children and youth with Down syndrome, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy or brain injuries are not qualifying for services that will help them thrive.

Every child and youth deserves the supports and services they need to live full, happy and healthy lives. We're taking action to put the needs of children and youth at the centre and make services better, more inclusive and easier to access from birth to age 19 and in every part of the province. I sit on the Select Standing Committee for Children and Youth, and these changes are in line with repeated recommendations from the Representative for Children and Youth and the all-party committee, as well as from conversations with families, advocates, children and youth.

We're putting children and youth at the centre of our new system.

We're bringing services together by having multidisciplinary teams in one-stop family connections hubs throughout the province that will make it easier for families to get their children the supports they need. These coordinated hubs, run by community service providers, will give families access to a range of professionals without the need for a referral or a diagnosis.

Each hub will be responsible for having consistent core services and a multidisciplinary team for the children, youth and families they serve, in addition to services tailored for the individual children and communities they support. These will include speech-language, occupational and physical therapists, behaviour consultants and interventionists, as well as other staff, as needed.

I've had exhausted families with kids with autism in my office in Prince Rupert. They've struggled to navigate finding services for their child. The amount of research, time and energy that goes into sourcing supports for their child is enormous. That's for families that are privileged enough to be able to do so. There are numerous families falling through the cracks, because sourcing services is a challenging process at the best of times. In rural B.C., often there are no services to be found. Services are concentrated in urban parts of B.C.

I've also had families come into my office with children with other support needs or children waiting years for a diagnosis. These families aren't qualifying for services at all. I've even heard of families who've cleverly shared their autism funding with other families because a child clearly needed support services but didn't have the diagnosis for them.

The Inspire Kids FASD Society of B.C. helps families and children with FASD, or fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, connect to each other and access services and supports. Here's what they had to say about our proposed changes in their statement on the changes announced by MCFD regarding the service model for children with special needs in B.C.:

"Children in British Columbia are our province's most important resource. Every child in every community should be supported to the full extent they need to lead a meaningful and full life. This support needs to be respectful, accessible and individualized for each child and each family in British Columbia.

"Our current system for accessing support through the Ministry of Children and Families, children and youth with special needs, has been challenging or inaccessible for many families. Marginalized families, children with lesser-known diagnoses, parents with disabilities, parents who have additional barriers to service and families with added trauma regarding government programs are all locked behind a door that keeps them from helping their children lead a safe and happy life.

"In her report *Excluded: Increasing Understanding, Support and Inclusion for Children with FASD and Their Families*, Dr. Jennifer Charlesworth, the Representative for Children and Youth in B.C., outlined the stigma, trauma and barriers that the current system has placed in front of youth with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and their caregivers.

[11:45 a.m.]

"Inspire Kids looks forward to working with MCFD and partners to implement an equitable, robust and accessible provincial program that will reach all children in British Columbia. We commit to holding the stakeholders accountable, engaging respectfully, being part of the solution, and working towards empowering and educating families on the best way to move all children and their caregivers forward to a meaningful, safe and happy life in our beautiful province."

For too long I've heard from families in North Coast asking for help to navigate the complex and limited system in supporting children and youth with special needs. I've heard how hard it is to actually find services in rural B.C.

While I appreciate that change can be difficult, I do think making services more inclusive and accessible, especially for rural children and youth, is the right thing to do.

M. Bernier: It's an honour to rise today to talk about parents and parents' choice on raising their children.

I want to maybe start by just acknowledging the member for North Coast.... I'm not sure where she was arguing for the points here on this debate. She knows all too well, as do I, the challenges in rural British Columbia as we stand today — the challenges for parents to access medical opportunities to help their family, supports for their children. Now we're at a point where we're discussing the government, and her government, the NDP, actually clawing back and making it worse for rural British Columbians.

I think it's important to really highlight.... I mean, I'm a parent. I have five children. I know many of the MLAs in this chamber have children as well. To actually sit here and debate the fact that the NDP government figures that they know better than all of the parents in British Columbia is astounding to me, for government to think that they know best. I mean, the whole point is listening to parents, parents who are raising their children.

You know, I know the members want to heckle. It's unfortunate that they are trying to insinuate that we're politicizing an issue when all we're doing is defending the rights of the people of British Columbia, who have been contacting this House, who have been contacting us with their concerns, with their outright displeasure with what government is doing right now without consultation, without listening to the parents who know better.

It's absolutely astounding that the NDP members say — by us reading quotes, by us talking about the concerns that people of British Columbia are raising — that that's politicizing. Well, shame on them. They need to actually start listening to these same parents that we are.

Taking choice away is wrong. Clawing back supports is wrong. Now, whether that's taking education choice away.... We heard the Education critic earlier talk about IDL, where parents are now being told what kind of education choice government is now going to make for them, that they can no longer necessarily choose the independent school that's working for their disabled child because

they now have to maybe go to a school district within their area. They've lost that choice.

For the few members on the NDP benches that are actually from rural B.C., I'm surprised they're not fighting against this as well, because we know how challenging it is to have those supports and those choices in rural British Columbia. To take them away is downright wrong. When the Minister of Children and Family Development announced this new hub model, it caught everybody off guard because there was no consultation, no discussion. Parents are rightfully scared and concerned, because their choice is being clawed back. They were blindsided.

The minister stood in this House and said: "Don't worry. Every community in this province is going to get supports." How is that a rational comment? How is that possible? Is she saying there's going to be a hub in Fort Nelson? Is there going to be a hub in Pouce Coupe? Is there going to be a hub in Prince Rupert, as we heard from the member there? I really doubt it.

[11:50 a.m.]

How is there going to be extra support? It's going to make it more difficult for children and for families in rural British Columbia, when they already have to look at the.... I will say this. There are already limited resources.

Let's fix that. Let's fix that challenge. But you don't fix it by blowing up a system that's working for thousands and thousands of children and families in this province and clawing back the supports they have with this altruistic top-down idea that you are actually going to help by taking something away. That is downright not factual, and it's wrong. It's not going to help these kids.

We've heard that there are children and families falling through cracks right now. If that's the case, fix that issue.

I support government 100 percent, if they can find a way of fixing that. But clawing back supports for families who already have supports is not the way to fix the issue.

J. Brar: Mr. Speaker, I am scheduled to speak, but first, I would like to seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

J. Brar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Visiting us today is a very special guest from Surrey. We have Paul Sumal. He is a public servant for 16 years as a deputy sheriff at the New West Supreme Court. Paul has been a president of my Fleetwood B.C. NDP association for many, many years, and he has provided significant leadership to our people and has done a super job to support me as an MLA and also as a candidate. So I would like to say, Paul, thank you very much.

Joining with him is his beautiful wife, Daween Sumal. She is the assistant director of capital infrastructure project delivery at B.C. Hydro. They have two beautiful daughters.

Abigail, in grade 7, enjoys competitive dance, gymnastics and swimming and wants to be an interior designer. The next one is Julianne. She is in grade 5 and enjoys dancing, gymnastics, swimming and soccer and wants to be a police officer when she grows up. Then we have Alisdair, their son....

Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. How long is your list, because you are going to run...?

J. Brar: This is the last.

Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

J. Brar: Their son, grade 3, enjoys soccer, gymnastics and swimming but would like to start playing football.

I would like to ask the House to please make them feel welcome.

Debate Continued

J. Brar: Once again, I am pleased to respond to the motion introduced by the member for West Vancouver-Capilano.

Every child and youth deserves the supports and services that they need to live a full, happy and healthy life and to reach their full potential. That's why we are putting children and youth at the centre of our new system moving forward.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

I have been listening to the members from the other side, and it's very clear to me that they have a completely different perspective. Talking about listening to parents is important, and all that, but their record in government does not match at all with what they are proposing today, sitting on the opposition benches.

The B.C. Liberal government came down with massive funding cuts to the programs and services designed for the care of children immediately after taking over in 2001. These are not my words, Mr. Speaker. George Abbott, a long-term MLA and a former cabinet minister under the B.C. Liberal government, recently published his first book, and he takes a surprisingly critical look, in this book, at the tragic impact on children, youth and disadvantaged British Columbians as a result of the massive tax cuts that the B.C. Liberal government introduced during their first days in government to please their wealthy friends.

[11:55 a.m.]

These cuts meant a huge loss of revenues to the province. As a result, the B.C. Liberal government began to ruthlessly cut spending on social programs and services, including a 23 percent funding cut to the Ministry for Children and Family Development, known as MCFD at that time.

Paul Pallan, the former Child, Youth and Family Advocate, devoted his 2001 annual report, released after the first B.C. Liberal budget, almost entirely to his concerns regarding the devastating impact of a 23 percent cut — in other words, \$360 million — to the MCFD's operating budget. George Abbott, a person well known to members on the other side, states in his book that 9,000 B.C. families lost their child care subsidies, and this forced some of them to abandon their child care spaces.

So the advocate urged the government — and made a compelling case — to exempt MCFD from budget cuts, to save programs and services for children. But no one listened to him, or to parents, or to children. That's what the members sitting on the other side did. Some of the members who sit on the other side today were part of that government.

We are putting children and youth at the centre of our new system, moving forward. Under the current system, many children and youth who have disabilities or other needs are not able to access the levels of support that they need, because they do not have the right diagnosis to access services, or services are not available in their community. This is especially true for rural and Indigenous communities. That's why we are moving to a new needs-based approach, so that every child and youth gets the services they need, when they need it, and in every part of the province, including rural areas.

We are bringing services together through new family connections hubs, and these coordinated hubs will give families access to a range of professionals, without the need for a diagnosis. No child or youth will be turned away from services or supports if they have support needs, under the new program.

I am very pleased to support and to continue this new program under this government.

T. Halford: I stand in this House and speak proudly to the motion put forward by my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that a few members have come in here with a set of talking points. When I see that, it always is a very strong signal to me that that's because maybe a few people in this building don't want you talking about that, and they want you sticking to those talking points. But I'm not going to stick to talking points today. I'm going to tell a story.

There is a little boy that I know. I know this little boy very well. I've known him for 13 years. This little boy tried out for soccer, and he didn't like it. He didn't feel like he had a place. This little boy went out for football, and again, he felt like he didn't have a place. This little boy, at the age of six, was diagnosed with ASD. This little boy had parents that had fear, every time he walked out of the House, to see if he was going to be accepted, to see if he was going to be able to meet those challenges on his own — every day. That is a fear that his parents continue to have today.

[12:00 p.m.]

Since this little boy wasn't able to participate in team sports, his parents got him a trainer — somebody that he was able to work with, a couple of days a week, to ensure that he was staying active, that he was getting physical, that he was understanding about nutrition. I think it's important that parents....

With autism, they are faced with the fact that children need stability. They need consistency. It is very important to children with autism that they have consistency and routine in their daily lives. Not one member on that side can speak to consistency and how this model makes that better.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members, Surrey–White Rock has the floor. No interruptions, please.

T. Halford: And I would challenge the member for Surrey–Fleetwood. If he's going to come in here and cite past members, he may want to check their names first.

Other than that, I do want to make sure that we stand up for those little boys and girls that are in our communities, that are in our homes. For us to come in here and say: "No. Government knows best. We will take it from here, parents. We will provide. We will pick the services that your child will need...."

I want a member of that side of this House to explain to the little boy that I just described how they know better than his mom and dad, because they don't. The members of this House know it. But they don't have the ability to come here and speak the truth. And that is shameful.

I think that these parents, these families, deserve better than what this government is giving them today. They absolutely do. I cannot believe a decision of this importance was done in this isolation. That is shameful. That is wrong. That is cowardly. This government knows it, and these members know it. That is why they come in here and they read speaking points, because they have nothing else to say. That is a sad reality.

So how, when you have a constituent come into your office and express their outrage at what is going on here...? It is happening to every single MLA in this House. I dare one of the MLAs to challenge me and say that's not true — that your inbox is not filling up from parents, that your phones are not ringing from parents advocating for their kids. Do you refer to those speaking notes? Do you cite former members? Do you cite books? If you can do it in here, why don't you do it to them?

That's all I have to say on this. I really can't say much more.

T. Halford moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. J. Whiteside moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until 1:30 p.m. today.

The House adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

HANSARD SERVICES,
REPORTING AND PUBLISHING

DIRECTOR

D'Arcy McPherson

MANAGER OF REPORTING SERVICES

Laurel Bernard

MANAGER OF PUBLISHING SYSTEMS

Dan Kerr

TEAM LEADERS

Mike Beninger, Kim Christie, Barb Horricks, Paula Lee,
Julie McClung, Karol Morris, Glenn Wigmore

EDITORS

Erin Beattie, Janet Brazier, Sophie Crocker, Tim Ford, Jane Grainger,
Betsy Gray, Iris Gray, Mary Beth Hall, Kendra Heinz, Sophie Heizer,
Bill Hrick, Quinn MacDonald, Anne Maclean, Claire Matthews,
Jill Milkert, Sarah Mitenko, Erik Pedersen, Janet Pink,
Robyn Swanson, Antoinette Warren, Heather Warren, Kim Westad

INDEXERS

Shannon Ash, Robin Rohrmoser

RESEARCHERS

Brooke Isherwood, David Mattison

TECHNICAL OPERATIONS

Pamela Holmes, Daniel Powell, Patrick Stobbe

Copyright © 2021 Legislative Assembly of British Columbia

The *Official Report of Debates (Hansard)* and webcasts of
chamber proceedings are available at www.leg.bc.ca.

For inquiries contact:

Hansard Services
612 Government Street
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4
Telephone: 250-387-3681
Email: hansardservices@leg.bc.ca

Published by Hansard Services under the authority
of the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly of British Columbia.