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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Her Honour the Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

SECOND SESSION, 42ND PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2021

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Routine Business

Prayers and reflections: B. Banman.

Introductions by Members

N. Letnick: I'd like to introduce British Columbians to a firm in my riding.

KF Aerospace is Canada's largest commercial maintenance, repair and overhaul company. Also an aircraft engineering firm and aircraft lessor, cargo carrier and proud training partner of the Royal Canadian Air Force, KF Aerospace's latest accomplishment is a new deal with Boeing to add two of their three additional conversion lines. One went to London, England, and two to Kelowna.

Congratulations to their hard-working team for securing this deal and bringing more business and opportunities to Kelowna. KF has four operational facilities across the country, with over 1,000 employees. The next mission is to secure Canada's future air training contract, and continue its partnership with the Royal Canadian Air Force for next 20-plus years.

[10:05 a.m.]

I'd like to voice my support for KF Aerospace in keeping our pilot and air crew training expertise fully here at home, and encourage leaders all across the government to do so with me.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Statements

ECONOMIC COLLABORATION IN THE CASCADIA CORRIDOR

R. Glumac: The Cascadia Innovation Corridor is the region between Vancouver; Seattle, Washington; and Portland, Oregon. We have a lot in common with our neighbours to the south, with our shared coastline, same time zone, natural beauty, common values, especially around climate and environment, and thriving science, technology and innovation sectors.

[S. Chandra Herbert in the chair.]

By working together, we can create opportunity and economic prosperity in this combined region beyond what any of our cities could achieve independently. By working together in the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, we could

become a global innovation hub rivalling any other region in the world.

The B.C. Business Council and Challenge Seattle have been leading efforts to nurture collaboration between business, academic and government leaders through the Cascadia Innovation Corridor steering committee and holding yearly conferences to discuss common interests and opportunities.

The Cascadia Data Alliance has created partnerships between UBC and the University of Washington, and others, around data science and cancer research, leading to many important projects.

A collaboration between Harbour Air and Kenmore Air has created the first downtown Vancouver to downtown Seattle seaplane flights, called the nerd bird, often used by tech companies and other businesses and for tourism.

These are just some examples of how we have been working together within our region. But as a region, we also face many common challenges, including a lack of affordable housing, traffic congestion and a need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Cascadia region is currently home to nine million residents and is expected to grow by another three to four million by 2050. At the same time, we recognize that the region needs to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 80 percent by 2050 in order to meet Paris accord targets. We know that we can address these common problems and challenges by working together.

Another promising initiative in the region is high-speed rail connecting Vancouver to Seattle to Portland. In 2019, B.C., Washington, Oregon and Microsoft funded a business case study for high-speed rail, confirming its viability, showing that high-speed rail could actually result in an increase of approximately half a billion Canadian dollars in economic activity throughout the region and create 200,000 jobs. Travel time between Vancouver and Seattle would be reduced to less than one hour, which would have an incredibly positive impact on our struggling tourism sector.

Reducing travel times would also create much stronger trade ties within the region, creating a stronger market for goods and more economic opportunity. High-speed rail is also electric, so it would reduce greenhouse gas emissions by six megatonnes in its first four decades of operations.

In 2020, the next phase of planning for high-speed rail was completed, outlining options for establishing a long-term decision-making framework, including governance structures, potential financing strategies and engagement plans. With the election of President Biden, building high-speed rail is certainly becoming more of a reality.

There was much discussion about high-speed rail at the recent Cascadia Innovation Corridor conference last week, but the concept of high-speed rail is embedded in the overarching goal of creating the world's first truly sustainable megaregion, addressing housing affordability, congestion and greenhouse gas reduction.

[10:10 a.m.]

The challenge with building affordable housing in urban cores is that any upzoning of existing housing in these areas may not actually reduce housing prices. As the properties themselves become increasingly scarce, they become increasingly expensive.

However, with high-speed rail, it makes it viable to extend commuting distances from urban cores to areas where land is much less expensive, not only extending the commuting distance but extending it while reducing carbon emissions. While high-speed rail hasn't been utilized very much in North America so far, it's been utilized in other countries around the world for quite some time.

Japan started building high-speed rail in 1964 and now has over 2,600 kilometres of rail lines. Spain began in 1992 and has over 3,100 kilometres of high-speed rail lines. China only started in 2007 and already has almost 10,000 kilometres of high-speed rail lines, and another 10,000 is under construction. In total, there are over 50,000 kilometres of high-speed rail track around the world, transporting over three billion passengers per year.

Andy Kunz, president of the U.S. High Speed Rail Association, stated: "High-speed rail is something that is basic infrastructure, and it's the most efficient, smartest, best form of transportation ever invented any way you measure it." The timing may be right, because the recent passing of the Investment Jobs Act in the U.S. dedicated \$66 billion for rail, and the Build Back Better Act dedicates a further \$10 billion for high-speed rail.

We know we're facing unprecedented immediate challenges, but we also know we are facing long-term challenges, and we have many opportunities to work together on the horizon. In my role as Premier's liaison to Washington state, I look forward to working with our neighbours to the south for the benefit of all British Columbians.

B. Banman: Thank you to the member opposite for his comments. He makes some excellent points with regard to high-speed rail, collaboration and working into the future. Economic collaboration with our partners to the south has always been a key tenet of our economic and culture identity as Canadians. Nowhere else in the world are there closer political and economic partnerships than between Canada and the United States, and few communities exemplify this relationships like our border communities in Abbotsford, Langley, Chilliwack, Surrey and the Fraser Valley.

This spirit of economic collaboration and the interconnectedness of our infrastructure and supply chains have helped support communities throughout British Columbia and the Cascadia corridor. Not only have communities on both sides of the border benefited from the economic opportunities from this abundant land we share, it is our close partnership between these same communities that has allowed us to prosper and move our economies for-

ward together to enjoy the many successes and overcome many of the challenges.

This past week our province has faced one of the greatest challenges in recent history — a series of floods that destroyed businesses and farmland; cut off vital highways, ports and railways; and displaced numerous people. The impact these events will have on our province's supply chain and the livelihoods of thousands of British Columbians will be felt for weeks, if not months, to come.

In this time of crisis, when our infrastructure and our communities have been so heavily impacted by the horrific floods we've witnessed, our economic partnerships with our communities south of the border are absolutely invaluable. While vital routes and supply chains to get goods and services in and out of the Lower Mainland are cut off, our communities will depend heavily on the infrastructure of our southern neighbours to keep our economies moving along.

I still remember when I was back in school in the mid-'90s in Portland, Oregon, when Washington state experienced a similar flooding disaster that put much of the I-5 corridor out of commission. I know we would help our neighbours to the south through many alternative routes through Abbotsford and Fraser Valley border crossings so that our American partners could keep many of their invaluable supply chains open. Simply put, we would help our neighbours to the south.

[10:15 a.m.]

And now that we find ourselves in a similar situation, desperately seeking routes to ensure our grocery stores remain stocked with goods, our pumps and gas stations can still provide gasoline and our residents have ways to connect with supports, shelters and their loved ones, we must work in close coordination with our economic partners in the Cascadia corridor to help coordinate these routes and transportation plans. Our people depend on it.

Through the partnership that helps us strengthen these relationships, like the Pacific North West Economic Region Economic Leadership Forum, government has a responsibility to communicate the needs of thousands of British Columbians on the ground, who need our partners to the south now more than ever. Our economies are closely tied with the land and environment that we share, and we have come to recognize they face the same environmental challenges as well. To protect what we hold dear, we must work not only strengthen our economies but our disaster response efforts as well.

When the risk of the Nooksack River overflowing and flooding the region became apparent, it's unacceptable that our neighbours to the south had 48 hours more of warning than us. Our government must review events that unfolded and learn from our mistakes to ensure we can bring our emergency alert systems and our preparedness efforts up to the same level as our southern neighbours and give our citizens as much prior warning as possible.

Now is the time to talk about how we can strengthen

our economic collaboration and the steps our government must take to mitigate the shared environmental risks our community in the corridor face. By doing so, we can ensure better protection and economic prosperity for all.

R. Glumac: Last week Premier Horgan, Governor Inslee of Washington and Governor Brown of Oregon signed a memorandum of understanding that outlines our shared challenges and how we can work together to address them. This MOU outlines how our region faces long-term challenges related to housing affordability, mobility, social justice and climate, and how these challenges have come about because of rapid population growth that is expected to continue in the years to come.

If there isn't a collaborative plan to deal with this growth, then our challenges will get worse, and the challenges will fall disproportionately on low-income individuals who cannot afford to live close to where jobs are located. This will create greater inequality in the region.

The MOU states: "Shared collaboration on technology, supply chain resiliency, climate abatement and emission reductions can be achieved through bringing together governments, companies and communities in implementing innovative solutions from academic experts and the private sector, based on our common values, including a shared commitment to the environment, equality and the entrepreneurial potential of our residents."

The MOU also outlines the collaborative work that has already been carried out in exploring high-speed rail in the region. It outlines the economic and environmental benefits of a high-speed rail line and recognizes that funding has become available at the federal level in the U.S., for high-speed rail, and that presents a timely opportunity for the region.

The MOU, signed by B.C., Washington and Oregon, commits to pursuing high-speed rail in the Cascadia corridor. It commits to establishing a policy committee to build relationships and coordinate efforts to advance the high-speed rail project. It commits to developing an organizational framework so that decisions can be made across the three jurisdictions, and it commits to engaging with the public on high-speed rail and working together on identifying potential funding sources.

In my role as Premier's liaison to Washington state, I am excited to be part of this initiative, and I hope that we will be able to bring our regions closer by working together for the benefit of all British Columbians.

Deputy Speaker: Of course, a general reminder that we do not use names in this chamber. Thank you.

SUPPORTING FEMALE ENTREPRENEURS

S. Cadieux: I'm grateful for the opportunity today, in the House, to highlight British Columbia's female entrepreneurs.

[10:20 a.m.]

Women are a vital part of our province's economic fabric, with female-owned businesses comprising nearly 40 percent of all businesses. We know that women have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, from greater job losses, fewer child care options and, unfortunately, even the rates of domestic violence, which have been demonstrated to be increasing over the last couple of years. That's why it's ever more important that we look to address systemic barriers and gender biases in our society.

Today we start by working to support female entrepreneurs. When women are empowered to start, own and operate their own businesses, they continue to work to shatter the glass ceilings. The province proclaimed Women's Entrepreneurship Day last Friday, and it got me reminiscing. In 1998, I started an online party planning business. Perhaps that was a bit ahead of its time, ahead of the curve of online buying in British Columbia, but it was a dream I followed — not as successfully as the member for Kelowna-Mission. Her accomplishments are certainly impressive and well known.

I do want to reflect on a few of the 180,000 women entrepreneurs that are making their dreams a reality today, people like Nathaly Nairn of Windfall Cider; Shaina Azad of Suva Beauty; Nicole Smith of Flytographer; Sonia Strobel, Skipper Otto; Leigh Joseph of Skwálwen Botanicals; Taran and Bunny Ghatrora of Blume; Natacha Beim of CEFA Schools; and in my community, my CA Michelle Moore, who owned the Rustic Rooster, an unfortunate casualty of the pandemic.

There's Sandra Christian, of Creative Kids Learning Centres; Mia Bui of White Sand Day Spa; Alaina Cloke, Crush Clothing; Nadin Elkhail, Peregrine House School; Faith Gibson, Mink Chocolate Café and LotusPedal; Annie Christiaens, of The Heart; and so many more — I could list them off for my whole time this morning — taking risks, building dreams, employing others, and providing services and support in our communities.

We know, as I said, that women have been disproportionately affected by the global pandemic. That certainly includes small business owners. Jill Earthy at WeBC and Paulina Cameron at the Forum have seen this inequity firsthand, and they are working on an ongoing basis to create awareness and provide solutions to barriers to access financing and networks for support.

There's so much more work to do. In my riding in Surrey and in the Lower Mainland, the region has seen a decline in female-owned businesses over the last eight years. While women still continue to break barriers for women on the whole, the wage gap has not only continued to increase, but in fact B.C. may be the worst offender. A 2019 *Vancouver Sun* article wrote: "Women in B.C. are earning, on average, almost 20 percent less than men, the largest gender pay gap in Canada."

The wage gap has significant impacts on the wider eco-

nomically. One 2017 report suggests that steps to decrease the wage gap could lead to economic benefits of up to \$150 billion in a nine-year period. This would mean significant economic benefits for societies that embrace policies to end the pay gap. I have introduced the Equal Pay Reporting Act in the Legislature, four times, in an effort to finally take action to close that gap here. Sadly, we have not yet discussed it.

The pandemic has also exacerbated further gender gaps in our own labour force, as women's participation is down to its lowest level in three decades. In fact, 1.5 million Canadian women lost their jobs in the first two months of the pandemic. These job losses were felt in sectors that predominantly women work in — hospitality, food service, retail, education, health care and social assistance. They were most affected by closures, earnings losses and layoffs.

We also know that women shoulder more of the child care responsibilities than their male partners and may have to refuse work or seek a reduction in hours if their kids require extra care, can't go back to school or go to child care. In order to ensure that women can re-enter the workforce, prioritizing investment in child care is vital. That has to include funding and training for child care providers to deal with the ECE worker shortage.

Earlier this year, speaking about current policy initiatives in B.C., Emily Gawlick, the executive director of the Early Childhood Educators of B.C., said: "Progress is so minimal it does not meet the needs of families or educators as they try to recover from the pandemic." Investing in a system that values and supports its child care providers is essential. We can't afford to lose the providers we have.

[10:25 a.m.]

Policy decisions that make creating spaces and providing child care unviable will hurt women, from operators to ECEs to the moms needing child care. Private providers deliver 60,000 child care spaces in British Columbia — half of the total — and they are largely owned and operated by women. Driving these spaces out of business would not only be catastrophic to the families who rely on them but especially for the hard-working women that own these child care centres or rely on child care so they can operate their own businesses.

It's time to rally the experts and make a conscious effort to support women in the workforce, no matter what path they are on. I look forward to continuing the discussion on working to support all of our female entrepreneurs in British Columbia.

B. Bailey: Thank you to the member opposite for raising this important topic in our chamber today.

Before I begin, I would like to also acknowledge the catastrophic climate events of the last week that have caused incredible loss and devastation throughout our province, specifically to share my deepest sorrow with the families of the four people who have lost their lives.

My thoughts continue to be with everyone who is im-

acted. In challenging times, we must continue to come together and support each other, and I thank all the B.C.ers who are lessening their use of fuel while we ensure emergency and restorative services can do their critical work.

I'm honoured to rise today to talk about something that's important to me personally: the role of woman entrepreneurs to our economy and to our economic recovery. I have twice been a co-founder of software studios and know all too well of the unique challenges women face as entrepreneurs as we face deeply-held biases that work to limit pathways to success — biases that we collectively must work to overcome.

Last Friday we celebrated our first Women's Entrepreneurship Day, celebrating the significant contributions that the more than 178,000 women entrepreneurs have made to the province's economy and society. This is a powerful community, making positive social and environmental impacts with their businesses.

These entrepreneurs have brought their innovative ideas to life and have helped to solve real-world problems. They have created new products and services that are needed in our homes, our families and our communities. They employ thousands of people throughout our province and are the fastest-growing segment of entrepreneurs.

I'm in awe of how women in this province have pursued their dreams and developed innovative businesses across all sectors, but the last 21 months have not been easy on anyone. The leadership that women entrepreneurs have displayed throughout the pandemic has been nothing short of inspirational. Many have had to rethink their business models and find new ways to reach their customers.

Women make up nearly 40 percent of small businesses in B.C., slightly higher than the national average. Many are focused on attracting new customers and enabling growth, and 47 percent expect to hire new employees in the near future.

As we understand that women have been disproportionately affected by the global pandemic, we are working to help support women get back on their feet and gain skills for their future. B.C. is partnering with Innovate B.C., Mitacs and the Information and Communications Technology Council, or ICTC, to help approximately 3,000 people from underrepresented communities, including women, get their first job in the tech sector through the innovator skills initiative program. The province's investment of \$15 million is being supplemented by Mitacs and ICTC, bringing the total investment envelope to \$29 million.

B.C. is also investing approximately \$7 million through the digital technology supercluster to support the Canadian tech accelerator program to help up to 2,000 unemployed and underemployed youth and young adults from underrepresented communities, including women, improve their tech skills and knowledge. It is likely that many of these folks will become entrepreneurs.

The province also worked with small businesses over

the past year to shift to a more digitally focused online presence. Through the launch online grant program, more than 5,500 businesses in B.C. were able to build their e-commerce capacity and market services online. Supporting businesses owned by women, Indigenous, Black and people of colour is a priority for this initiative.

[10:30 a.m.]

Between February and September 2021, the program provided nearly \$40 million in funding to improve online capacity and to help businesses reach their customers and expand to new markets. We are committed to removing obstacles faced by many women entrepreneurs to build a better B.C. for everyone.

Women's Entrepreneurship Day was created to honour and celebrate the work and success of all B.C.'s women entrepreneurs. We can all celebrate women's entrepreneurship by buying from B.C. women-owned businesses today and every day.

I'd like to use my last few seconds just to quickly highlight the excellent work of the Women's Enterprise Centre of B.C., renamed last week to WeBC, who provide an array of much-needed services such as business loans, advice, training and mentoring under the tutelage of the unstoppable Jill Earthy. We thank you, to WeBC and to all the other organizations working to support the growth of female entrepreneurship in our province.

S. Cadieux: I apologize to the member for Vancouver-False Creek for not acknowledging her entrepreneurial past in my opening comments. I do thank her, as well, for her remarks, because I do believe it's vital that we come together in this House to take action to support women in British Columbia and ensure that no matter gender, political preference or otherwise, people have access to equal support in participating in our economy.

Historically, women have been chronically underrepresented in Canadian industry and organizations, despite making up over half the population. Women continue to be underrepresented in leadership to this day. Just 8.5 percent of the highest-paid positions in Canada's Top 100 listed companies are held by women. That's a remarkable failure in representation. More so in the top 500 companies in the country. Women make up under just 20 percent of the board members of those institutions.

More women in leadership will have significant benefits for the pursuit of equality in the workplace. A study found that 67 percent of women have learned the most important lessons about leadership from other women. Eighty-six percent of women report that when they see more women in leadership, they are encouraged that they can get there themselves. It's essential for all women in our province that we look forward to building a better, more equal economy for the future.

I am buoyed by the excitement that female entrepreneurs are feeling about their future in British Columbia, about their ability to grow their businesses, but that excite-

ment isn't shared equally around our province right now. Women that own businesses in the north are struggling through the pandemic restrictions that still exist in that part of our province. We absolutely must recommit ourselves to ensure collectively that we are not enacting policy in this House that would further hurt those businesses and that excitement held by the female entrepreneurs in the rest of this province.

It's essential that we continue to build a more equal society and a more equal economy. We must ensure that the inequities of the past don't continue. The more we advocate to ensure that women are in positions of leadership through entrepreneurship, the more we inspire the next generation of female and non-binary leaders to create a better future for our province.

COMMUNITY HEROES ACROSS B.C.

D. Coulter: The devastating floods of the past week have devastated many parts of British Columbia. They've washed out roads and flooded farms and homes. In my community, we were forced to evacuate 1,000 homes. Thank goodness most are back.

Chilliwack was cut off from the rest of B.C. as roads were washed out and flooded. Highway 1 is still underwater and impassible. Grocery shelves went empty, and gasoline stations ran out of fuel. Farmers had trouble getting feed, and dairy farmers are still having to dump their milk.

Community heroes stepped forward and helped out their community members in need. They came forward to help feed folks who were running out of food.

[10:35 a.m.]

A particular instance was Wilma's Transition Society came forward and gave out two semi-truck trailers full of ready-to-cook meal kits. An organization called Kindness Chain Chilliwack, which is, for the most part, a group of volunteers from our local Islamic centre, were already community heroes before the flood. They have regular cleanups of downtown Chilliwack and seniors barbecues. They supported our health care workers when there were large protests by anti-public health opponents at our hospital and are planning on home-delivering hampers full of food for Christmas.

They have now put all hands on deck to assist folks with food security during this emergency. They've been delivering groceries and sundries to folks deeply affected by the flood, with the help of generous donations from Islamic Relief Canada. These folks are truly dedicated to making our community a better place and are the definition of community heroes. I hope they continue their hard work in Chilliwack for years to come.

Many of our residents have deep connections with the folks who live and farm on the Sumas Prairie, the hardest hit in the Fraser Valley. Many folks from all over, including Chilliwack, worked hard to save people and farm animals. I think we all remember the picture of folks on jet skis

and in aluminum boats saving dairy cows and taking them to higher ground. There was even a hovercraft. One of our very own city councillors, Chris Kloot, a dairy farmer himself, was said to be involved in the rescue of hundreds of animals.

On the Sumas River, a critical piece of infrastructure that is mitigating water levels is the Barrowtown pump station. Officials were worried that it would be overcome by the flooding and stop working. That led to the city of Chilliwack issuing an evacuation order for 1,000 homes in Yarrow. Hundreds of volunteers from all over, including many from Chilliwack, spent all night placing sandbags around the pump station. This allowed Yarrow's evacuation order to be downgraded to an alert.

If these volunteers hadn't been so willing to act, this disaster would have been immeasurably worse. Yarrow would have flooded, possibly other areas of Chilliwack, and the Sumas Prairie would have been even more devastated than it already has been, if that can be imagined.

First responders have also been amazing in this disaster. They have been coming from all around to help us out in the Fraser Valley. There are countless stories, but let me tell you about one in particular. I saw it in our local community paper. I think this story illustrates just how horrifying it would be to see the waters rising around you.

A man was checking on his parents' home in Yarrow as the evacuation alert came through. He noticed that the water levels were quickly rising, and a sudden wave of water went over the road, and he was trapped. The water rose outside and in the house by half a foot an hour. His cell phone went dead, and he was extremely worried that the pumps at the Barrowtown station would fail. He said to the *Progress*: "The fear of the pump station breaking and the Fraser River flowing through made me want to die." He was eventually rescued by the Coquitlam fire department and search and rescue personnel.

Countless stories of emergency services rescuing people during this disaster. I couldn't begin to try to tell them all here. While the floods in the Fraser Valley were devastating and we had many community heroes, there are heroes from all around the province that helped folks during this unprecedented rainfall and its aftermath. Folks were stranded by washed-out and closed highways, cut off from the outside world. They needed food and shelter.

Just up the No. 1 from my community, Hope was hosting around 1,100 stranded travellers, no mean feat for a community of only 6,100 folks. Groups and individuals have done amazing things to help these travellers. One group, KhalsaAid, got the help of London Air Services and flew in food to the stranded folks. London Air Services was also flying essential medications into Hope. These are truly community heroes.

Countless stories of community heroes, whether front-line workers or volunteers, have been told. They've done amazing things for their fellow community members during this unprecedented event. British Columbians have

stepped up in amazing ways to help each other through these crises. Whether they are front-line workers or volunteers, we've seen that when the chips are down, British Columbians will pull together. We truly have a strong feeling of solidarity with each other.

I'll end here, and I look forward to hearing my colleague from the other side.

[10:40 a.m.]

T. Halford: I want to thank the member for Chilliwack for his remarks. I am grateful to be able to rise today to highlight the enormous generosity in spirit and courage of British Columbians that has been on display over the last week. In a time of crisis, neighbours rally together to help one another, and that's just what happened when heavy rains and floods ripped through B.C. last week.

I know we can all speak to the heroism that has been on display since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, no matter what community we are in. But last week, once again, first responders, search and rescue and even the Canadian military stepped up and rushed to the many scenes of devastation. As these first responders continue their work ensuring the safety of roads and communities, we all extend our heartfelt thanks.

But it's more than just first responders. Community members from B.C. have all stepped up to volunteer their time and to donate to and help those affected. There are many organizations accepting donations, should anyone want to give, such as my family has. We did that with the Canadian Red Cross.

But as the member for Chilliwack mentioned in his remarks, I also want to thank the hundreds of Abbotsford locals who stepped up in the middle of the night to fill sandbags and protect the Barrowtown pump station from taking on additional water. Had it not been for the quick thinking and sacrifice of these residents, we may have seen even further catastrophic damage.

I want to recognize the farmers who joined together in the Sumas Prairie, who used motorboats, canoes and jet skis to move all animals they could to safe, higher ground. I think that's an image, and those images will be with us for generations to come. We know, in the weeks and months to come, that recovery will take a long time for farmers in that area. However, B.C.'s farming community will continue to rally together to support one another like never before.

So many in my own community of Surrey have also stepped up — especially in the Sikh community — with ongoing, selfless service in insuring that people have meals and supplies in the hours and days after the disaster. Dozens of volunteers, including the Guru Nanak food bank, came together and volunteered their time to cook over 3,000 meals. Not only did they prepare the meals, but they came together with Peter Dhillon of the Richberry group and got a helicopter to deliver those meals to those

stranded on the highway in Hope. Many more businesses in Surrey are stepping up, as well.

People are donating blankets, jackets and socks to flooding victims. Envision Financial announced that it will be donating \$100,000 to help with recovery efforts and so much more. In the months to come, as the recovery begins for hundreds of flood victims, the generosity and support of those not only in my community but from around B.C. does not go unnoticed.

It will be a long recovery for so many, as hundreds of people remain evacuated from their homes in Merritt and on the Sumas Prairie.

I also want to acknowledge the significant impact this disaster will and has had on people's mental health. Anxiety, worry and significant trauma are very real things, and thousands of British Columbians are coping with these things as we speak. I have often spoken in this chamber about the mental toll of the pandemic on British Columbians. However, this past year, especially with so many climate-related disasters — from the heat dome to wildfires and, now, to flooding — the mental health impacts of those are not to be minimized.

If you are a flood victim coping with trauma right now, there is hope for you. You can visit the Canadian Mental Health Association website for more information. Reach out to your doctor or your friends, and most importantly, let's check in on each other. Talking about your emotions and knowing that you are not alone are key. We will continue to stand alongside British Columbians, as so many have done over the past week.

D. Coulter: I would like to thank the member for Surrey–White Rock for his comments. They were rather insightful.

As I was saying earlier, where I left off, British Columbians have been through some unprecedented times over the last year, but they've risen to the occasion and showed a deep solidarity with their communities.

[10:45 a.m.]

The large brewery Molson Coors in Chilliwack, which we're very happy to have, stepped up and provided their spent grain for free as animal feed while Chilliwack was cut off from the outside world during the flood. I'm sure that their donation was well received. Volunteers from Greendale, which is in my constituency, volunteered and dried off calves that were standing in water for hours. They were shivering and in bad shape, but folks got them dried off, warm and blanketed.

There's a heartwarming picture in the local paper of a man also rescuing the calves in a jet boat, taking them to dry land. It's actually kind of cute. Saving those calves not only helped our farmers, but it was the humane thing to do. Folks from all over organized drives to deliver food and essentials to the Fraser Valley and Hope.

An example of that is one woman from Maple Ridge, who, upon seeing the overwhelming need, coordinated

food and non-perishables, like winter jackets and clothing, for the folks in Hope. She collected the things and took them to the airport in Pitt Meadows where there were already helicopters airlifting things into Hope. There are countless stories of folks stepping up during this crisis. I know I will be missing many, but I hope they know how valuable their help has been and that they are valued. There will be a lot more stories of community heroes to come out of this unprecedented disaster.

This last year has also had other unprecedented events, from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the heat dome, forest fires to the flooding this past week. There are so many amazing stories from around British Columbia of the amazing sense of community and shared responsibility that we have for one another. I can't even begin to tell all their stories. I'd need several days to do that.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to thank our community heroes today.

B.C. TECHNOLOGY GAPS

M. Bernier: I appreciate hearing all of the different speeches that we've heard today about so many important issues that are facing us here in the province. I know, as we've talked about in the last couple of weeks, those issues have become more and more pressing for all of us.

We know British Columbia is a vast province. It's the size of the United States' Washington, Oregon, and California combined. It can fit multiple European countries within the borders of British Columbia, and with that, it's a very diverse province. We have a lot of challenges that come, and we know that it's hard to govern a province of this size with different issues, different times — things take place in different places. We know our geography. We know the climate changes depending on where you are in the province.

To get information and to overcome the challenges of the diversity in our province, though, we use technology. We turn to technology. It helps us communicate. It allows us to build infrastructure. It helps us plan for the future — helps us connect with our loved ones. We have come so far in the majority of our province with technology. People rely on it. It's a tool in the tool box now for all of us. It can help us respond to emergencies — to disastrous situations where speed and clarity are of the essence. People look to us, and they look to government for leadership.

This is why so many jurisdictions have set up the emergency alert systems, and they use that to communicate warnings to their residents during a time of crisis. We've seen how that's played out with these crisis situations we've had over the last couple of years here in British Columbia. These alerts can be sent directly to people's cell phones or other wireless devices, warning us — warning them, warning family members — of any impending danger, whether it's an earthquake, a tsunami, tornados, fires, floods or even a multitude of

other emergencies where we need to get information out to people to give them advance warning.

Unfortunately, this technology, which is available almost everywhere, in contrast with most other Canadian provinces, has not been utilized here in British Columbia for anything other than tests. Despite no shortage of disasters befalling our province this last year, we have not utilized a tool. I think everybody in this House knows when your phone vibrates or rings — it's human nature now — one of the first things people do is they look at their phone to see what it is.

[10:50 a.m.]

Is it a loved one? Is it a friend sending them a message or, in some cases, is there an opportunity to send a warning? Almost everyone in all corners of our province has a phone now or some form of technology, young or old. We know that. That's how we communicate now.

Here in B.C., we've opted into the Alert Ready system. It's the same one that's used federally, as well as in Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island and the Yukon. Other provinces have even brought in their own systems that they use in conjunction with the federal Alert Ready system, including Alberta, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick and the Northwest Territories. So right across our country, people have put in systems to give advance warning and alerts to people in times of crisis. Even down in the United States, we've seen that. We know that they have systems they use.

The key difference here is we are the only jurisdiction not using a system and a tool that we have to alert people in a time of crisis. We've all seen our phone vibrate once a year when we do a test of the system. We know technology is there. We know the system works, but for some reason, we have not been using it. The United States has used their system almost 61,000 times since established. Our Canadian neighbour, Alberta: 80 times in the last few years, 20 of those in the last year alone. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario — the list goes on.

Everyone who has this system has been using a system to alert their citizens when there has been a crisis that government felt advance warning could help them to save lives and possibly property. Yet here in B.C., as we know, we had a heatwave, where almost 600 people lost their lives, unfortunately; one of the most severe wildfire seasons of all time; and now catastrophic flooding and mudslides, but we have not used a tool that we have.

This is a serious issue, especially in situations like we've seen in the recent floods, where advance warning could have helped. Somebody could have chosen possibly to stay at home or chosen not to drive. With advance warning, our agricultural sector — where we know every minute counts — could have used that time to possibly save some of their livestock or even parts of their business.

We just need to remember that we have a device at our disposal. We have an opportunity to help our citizens. As I said, every highway in and out of the Lower Mainland

was shut down. Houses and families were devastated by the floods.

I know that from every single person in this House, our hearts go out to all of those families who have lost loved ones, who have lost their way of life and who are now struggling and looking for guidance, looking for support and looking for leadership.

We need to remember that there is a gap, but the gap is not in the technology that we have. The gap is in how we are using that technology and the potential that we have to do better to help the citizens here in British Columbia.

B. D'Eith: I wanted to thank the member for Peace River South for bringing up the topic of technology gaps. Certainly, we have seen technology do amazing things in this province during the pandemic. For example, we saw technology companies pivoting, allowing their data to help medical research. It's absolutely been amazing. I am absolutely confident during these climate change events that are happening unprecedentedly in British Columbia that that technology will also help in the future.

I would remind the member, of course, that the local mayor, Henry Braun, for example in Abbotsford, chose not to use the system that he's talking about because he didn't want to panic people. Because if it goes out to too many people in the area that don't need to hear it, then that can actually cause more problems.

[10:55 a.m.]

Quite frankly, I appreciate what the member is saying, but the Solicitor General has also said that in the spring a more robust system that can target into specific locations will be implemented. I appreciate the member's comments, but I am absolutely confident in our tech sector.

In fact, we have one of the most amazing tech sectors in the world. The tech industry actually employs 100,000 people. That's 10,000 tech companies that generate \$23 billion in revenue. We have, actually, Vancouver, the third-fastest-growing tech hub in North America.

During the pandemic, tech companies were able to pivot and actually do very well. But what it did is shine a light on a gap in technology, and that is connectivity around the province. In order for people to have education, for our youth to have education, for people to be able to work in the tech sector, for example, they need that connectivity.

That's why I'm so pleased the connecting British Columbia program was expanded with a one-time \$90 million grant as part of the StrongerBC program for B.C.'s economic recovery. Budget 2021 actually brought base funding of \$40 million over the three-year fiscal.

This is really important, because including partnerships with the First Nations Tech Council, this will ensure that we have 225 communities, 84 of them being Indigenous, that will get connected. One example is the \$45 million Connected Coast project that's laying fibre optic cable that will allow fibre optics from Haida Gwaii right to the south Island. These investments are helping to connect people

and communities and local businesses, because that's what we need in the post-pandemic economy, especially in the tech sector.

Another gap in technology is going to be jobs. We are looking at 75,000 jobs that are going to be needed by 2029. One of these gaps, we're filling by adding 2,200 new tech seats in British Columbia, including diverse and underrepresented people.

I know that the MLA from west side Kelowna was not that pleased with funding going to diverse and underrepresented people. However, we believe the policy that we don't want to have people on the bench when we have such a demand. Investing in these types of things with underrepresented people will actually bring many, many more people into the tech sector. There are more than actually 3,000 people from underrepresented groups who are going to benefit from the innovator skills innovation program.

Another thing is the fact that we want to see technology around the province, and of course, connectivity is going to allow this to happen. We've had such amazing successes in places like Nelson, with companies like Traction on Demand. Or in the north, New Zealand just acquired Prince George Teem Fish project. Microsoft invested in Kelowna's Two Hat company. In Vancouver Island, Barnacle Systems is doing amazing work for the tech for boat security.

There are gaps. There are gaps that we are trying to fill. One, of course, is in terms of innovation. One is in terms of investing, and that's why we also have the InBC \$500 million strategic fund going. By dramatically increasing connectivity, creating thousands of new seats in post-secondary and encouraging growth of tech around the province by providing robust investment, we are filling those gaps.

M. Bernier: Thank you to the member opposite for Maple Ridge–Mission for his comments that almost highlight the issue that I'm trying to raise today.

Technology is here. We have the technology. Technology is getting better every day. Everybody in this House has always supported a robust technological sector and the advancements that we've seen in that. British Columbia is a leader and has been a leader for a long time.

That's why I find it quite astounding when the member touts the benefits and the amazing progress we've made in the technological area, in the technology sector, that we're not actually using it to its potential. That is the challenge that we need to address.

[11:00 a.m.]

We have seen many times over the last years, as well, through COVID, as the member mentioned, that yes, gaps are revealed, and work is done to try to fill those gaps. There were cracks in the health care system, and we're working to try to fix those, to look at those investments.

We look at the climate-related disasters that we've seen in the last year. We've also noticed the gaps, though, in our

ability, in government's ability, to react in a timely manner and to use that technology that we have at our disposal. Communication is vital. It gives advanced warning. It helps people be informed on the current conditions. More than anything, we can use it to help give confidence to our citizens, especially in the time of a crisis.

Without information — I think we all know this — anxiety grows. Panic can take over, and people are going to look anywhere they can for information. If we are not using tools that we have at our disposal to help people, they will look for other places for information, which sometimes, as we've seen, can be incredibly dangerous, especially when that information that sometimes people grasp for is not accurate because we have not been doing our job of getting it out to them.

We have this Alert Ready system, and again, as I mentioned, we know it works. We have all seen the tests. How bad does it have to get before we understand we have this technology at our fingertips that we can use to possibly save lives? We need to recognize there's a tool in the toolbox that we should have been using. The gap, again, right now is not the technology. It's the fact that we are not using that technology to its potential, and we can do better.

Hon. J. Whiteside: I ask that the House consider proceeding with Motion 20, standing in the name of the member for Vancouver-Kensington.

Deputy Speaker: Members, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed to Motion 20 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

Private Members' Motions

MOTION 20 — ACTIVISM AGAINST SEXISM AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

M. Elmore: I'm very honoured to move the motion today.

[Be it resolved that this House reaffirm our commitment to fighting sexism and misogyny as we recognize the 30th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign and beyond.]

[N. Letnick in the chair.]

The Ending Violence Association of B.C. estimates that 1,000 girls are physically or sexually assaulted every week in B.C. — 1,000 a week in all of our communities across our province. Young women and girls under 25 years of age account for over half of the victims. Women in rural areas experience the highest rates of intimate partner violence. Indigenous women, Black women, women of colour,

transgender, women living with disability, living in poverty, precarious workers, including migrant workers, and people with intersecting marginalized identities face a disproportionately higher risk of sexual assault — speaking to the systemic, institutionalized inequality.

This is the stark reality and context for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, the campaign to galvanize action to end violence against women and girls in B.C. and around the world. Everyone deserves to live a life free from the threat of violence. It's clear and important to provide services to support victims and survivors for them to break their silence and to have the support to leave these violent relationships.

[11:05 a.m.]

Our government is committed to investing \$734 million to build transition houses in every part of the province to ensure that adequate housing is available; creating new paid job-protective leave for five days, the first time for people who have experienced domestic abuse or violence — this is key in terms of supporting survivors to be able to exit these violent relationships; and improving access to emergency assault services with a \$20 million grant to the Ending Violence Association.

These are concrete services that will help to support victims and survivors. In addition to that, we need to take a long-term view and look at committing towards reducing inequality and poverty in our province. Our commitment to B.C.'s first poverty reduction plan, the strategy TogetherBC, to reduce overall poverty by 25 percent and child poverty by 50 percent over five years, is a key commitment.

To expand our commitment for women to access affordable child care, \$10-a-day child care, is also key, and also ensuring that in our school system — kindergarten to grade 12 and post-secondary institutions — we undertake educational awareness campaigns. This is important.

We have, as well, an independent human rights commissioner and a clear commitment, I think I would say, from all members of the House and British Columbians to reduce inequality and ensure that we have a more fair province. The safety and well-being of all people in B.C. depends on everyone taking action to help end gender-based violence and to make our province safer.

I'm asking for all of us to participate, to reaffirm the commitment to fight the hatred in our heart and in the hearts of our fellow British Columbians. Misogyny, hatred towards women. White supremacy and racism, hatred towards racialized and Indigenous peoples. Hatred from homophobia, from transphobia. This hatred has no place in B.C.

The campaign for 16 days to end gender-based violence is an opportunity for all of us to reflect, to act, to support the commitment to ensure that British Columbia is a province where everyone is safe. Together we can end gender-based violence.

C. Oakes: I want to thank the member for Vancouver-

Kensington for bringing this important motion forward. Safety is one of the most fundamental needs of human existence, yet every single day the physical, emotional and mental safety of individuals is stripped away in the very places they should feel the most secure. As November marks national Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and November 25 being the Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it is very important that we have this discussion.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an annual international campaign. It begins on November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and concludes on December 10, which is the world Human Rights Day. This year marks the 30th anniversary of this important campaign. Here in British Columbia and in my riding of Cariboo North, this is an issue that is still widespread. These 16 days are an important opportunity for us to come together to speak up against gender-based violence and to renew our commitment to ending violence against women.

It is important to remember violence has many different forms. Often, when one thinks of gender-based violence, they picture a bruised individual who has just been abused by a spouse. While this certainly does happen, the issue is often far more complex than that and can include sexual abuse, emotional abuse, intimidation and many other aspects. If we consider that one in three women experiences some form of domestic abuse, it quickly becomes apparent that somebody in your community has been impacted.

[11:10 a.m.]

In Cariboo North, there are over 25 missing and/or murdered women and girls whose families are still praying and waiting for answers. I know there are also other families that are facing significant trauma and loss, and it's campaigns such as this that allow us to shine a light and work towards creating change. We must continue to stand up with our communities and support those in need.

Some of these cases may date back decades, like our family friend and my childhood babysitter, Barb Lanes, who is still missing. All these women, all of these families are still waiting for closure, and we should never forget.

I want to thank all of the brave women and families who have come forward to share their stories during the murdered and Indigenous women and girls inquiry. In our office, I invite family members and community members to come forward and to learn about the 25 missing and/or murdered women in our community. We will not stop talking about them, and we will never, ever forget.

As we continue to spread awareness on this issue, I would like to take a moment to thank all of the organizations that are helping people in my community. In my riding, organizations such as the Amata Transition House and the Quesnel Women's Resource Centre play a very important role.

For anyone in our community, our office is a safe place

to come. We have lots of resources that we have worked tirelessly to put together to support people in our community. It's a safe place. Please come.

Stop by our office, and please take a moment to reach out to the families who have been impacted in our community. We have the monument that lists the families, the people who have been missing and/or have been murdered. Please take a moment to reach out to these families. They're still hurting. They're still waiting. We should never stop advocating and, above all, we need closure, and these families deserve our support.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this very important topic. I'd like to thank the member for bringing it forward.

R. Singh: I would really like to thank the member for Vancouver-Kensington for bringing up this important motion. Also, I would like to extend my thanks to the member for Cariboo North for her heartfelt words.

It's almost 31 years since the École Polytechnique massacre, and we are standing here talking about gender-based violence. My colleague, the member for Vancouver-Kensington, has already mentioned the dire statistics that we see every day related to domestic violence and gender-based violence. According to Ending Violence Association of B.C., there are an estimated 1,000 women who are physically or sexually assaulted every week in British Columbia. These are the numbers that are reported.

There are so many women. Having worked in this field myself, being a violence-against-women counsellor and having worked with LINC, I know — I have heard so many stories — that so many times women are so scared to even talk about this issue. So the number that we have — this is a staggering number, 1,000 per week — is not the exact number that we have. There are so many women who still, in this age and time, feel scared, feel stigmatized to even talk about this issue.

My colleagues have already mentioned that there's no place for violence in British Columbia, in Canada. I would say globally, there shouldn't be a place for violence. But this is the reality that many women live with.

[11:15 a.m.]

It is also very clear that women who are racialized or Indigenous women, as the member for Cariboo North has already mentioned, or bisexual women.... This reality is even much more harsher. The statistics, the reporting, the disaggregated data — we know that they are disproportionately impacted, but we don't have the right data to even collaborate the facts, what they are going through.

So I'm very proud of the work that we are doing in our anti-racism work that is happening within our government to bring this data legislation that will make these statistics much more clear. We know that this is happening around us, but then we will have the clear stats to put in the policy work that is required.

Governments, I always say, whether it is to fight racism,

whether it is to fight gender violence, have moral and ethical responsibility. But we cannot do this.... This is not just confined to one government ministry or just one sector. It's a collaborative approach that is required. I'm so proud that within our government, all the ministries, all the ministers and all the members, whether they are sitting on this side of the House or the opposite side of the House, stand together on this very, very important issue.

The cross-governmental work that has been done, not just providing funding... That is much needed, I know, having worked in the field myself. So many times, I have received a call in the middle of the night: a woman crying, wanting to flee domestic violence or a violent situation, and not a place to live in. I'm so proud of the fact that so much money has already been put into the resources that are required.

One thing that is extremely important.... Putting the resources into the transition houses is important, but the cultural aspect of it also, the cultural sensitivity that is required. Coming from a community like Surrey, which is very ethnically diverse, we know that domestic violence is a big issue in that community also. Setting up culturally sensitive transition houses is what the commitment of our government has been. I'm so proud of these services that are being provided in my community, like Harmony House, that provide women a culturally safe place where their language is spoken, where counselling is provided in a culturally sensitive method.

Also, as the member for Vancouver-Kensington mentioned, whether we are putting investment into accessible B.C., into child care services or into anti-racism, this all works in creating a better British Columbia, a better Canada, a better world for women, which they deserve.

M. Bernier: I, too — I think like everyone in the House today — am proud to rise in support of the motion before the House today, brought forward by the member for Vancouver-Kensington, about reaffirming our commitment in fighting sexism and misogyny. It's a critical issue, and it's one that, unfortunately, remains all too common in our society today. I also appreciate that it's not a political issue. This is something that we work on collaboratively in this House, collectively, to try to work towards awareness and to help drive change.

As said, starting on November 25, the International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women, it's the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. It's an annual international campaign that runs until December 10, which is Human Rights Day. It was started by activists at the first Women's Global Leadership Institute in 1991 and continues to this day.

We're recognizing.... I don't know if I should use the word celebrating, but it's 30 years of this hard work and the anniversary around ending violence against women now. In this anniversary year, we'll be talking about "Orange the world."

We have a long way to go — I think we all agree with that here in this House — but we have certainly seen progress in the last 30 years, with higher rates of reporting of sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence, as well as societal movements such as #MeToo, which, as we saw, brought the issue to the forefront of our cultural discourse over the last few years.

[11:20 a.m.]

These movements bring awareness while also working to break down stigma for our survivors and, hopefully, lead to further change. That's what we are talking about today, collectively, in this House.

However, though, with the progress that has been made, sexism and gender-based violence remain far too prevalent, still, in our world. There is much more work that we have to do together to create a better and more equal and safe world for all of us.

I was proud, when I was the Minister of Education, to bring forward policies into our school system to support our LGBTQ students and our youth who were being bullied, stigmatized and marginalized, and appreciate that was something that was supported by all sides of this House for the right reasons.

Today, we are doing the same thing: recognizing such an important issue that we need to work on collectively. We can see the need for continued work, though, right across Canada, as was mentioned. In 2018, though, almost one in three women of 15 years of age — think about that — and older felt unsafe or uncomfortable as a result of unwanted sexual behaviour that they experienced.

We also have to recognize, though, that not all women experience gender-based violence at the same rate. Indigenous women, for instance, and girls face increased vulnerability to gender-based violence as a result of specific barriers to safety and report experiencing violence at a 2.7 times higher rate than non-Indigenous women and girls.

Women also experience intimate partner violence at a higher rate than men. In 2018, almost eight in ten victims of police-reported intimate partner violence were female. These are staggering statistics, and they clearly demonstrate the continued need for advocacy, for policy change, for support and for work of this House, work in this chamber, and change and recognition in our daily lives for further equality and to fight sexism and misogyny in all forms.

We need to work hard together to undo the damaging stereotypes, to break down toxic masculinity, to take much-needed steps to keep women safe. We need to listen to the stories of these victims. We need to understand and hear what they are saying. We need to hold perpetrators accountable.

We all have a responsibility to call out sexism and misogyny wherever and whenever we see it. I hope together, and I know, all of us here in this House today will continue this important work to bring awareness and to bring change.

R. Leonard: I rise, along with others in this House, to support the motion from the member for Vancouver-Kensington in our commitment to fighting sexism and misogyny on this 30th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. This is a campaign for today, and it's a campaign for the years to come.

The campaign starts this Thursday, November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and ends on Human Rights Day, December 10. In those days, we also commemorate the 14 lives lost at École Polytechnique in Montreal — the 14 engineering students who were women and, for that reason alone, were murdered, and many others who were injured.

Everyone deserves to live a life free from the threat of violence. Yet many women, children, transgender and non-binary people in that world — they're not protected from domestic and sexual violence. At even greater risk of being on the receiving end of violent behaviour are women who are Indigenous, have a visible disability or are visible minorities, they're trans or they're 2SLGBTQ+ people.

[11:25 a.m.]

Breaking down the power imbalance in our culture that leads to violence is a long-fought and continuing battle. Whether it is in our institutions or one person at a time, each and every one of us needs to help to make the change. These 16 days of purposefully acting remind us that each new day brings new hope for a better future where people are treated with the respect and dignity they deserve, regardless of their gender.

COVID-19 has made the situation worse for people living with gender-based violence in their lives. The number of people who suffered at the hands of another rose with increased isolation and job loss, especially for women. COVID-19 has highlighted how power imbalance and inequity persist. Financial independence is freeing in so many ways. It gives you the means to allow yourself to recognize the harm. It means you can leave the violence behind and provide for yourself and your children.

Making life more affordable and services more accessible are cornerstones of our government that support women and others to move to a safer and nurturing place. Increasing the minimum wage and bringing up server wages. Opening doors for women to new career opportunities, like in the trades. More accessible post-secondary education, and more affordable and accessible child care, and more affordable homes. Our government's increased focus on policies and programs that make British Columbia fairer and more equal for everyone help give those experiencing gender-based violence the keys to freedom.

Our government recognized that people who have experienced domestic abuse and sexual violence need time to deal with the chaos and the hurt and instituted up to ten days of job-protected unpaid leave for people. More recently, this was improved, so five days of the ten are paid leave. In supporting this added cost to business, the comments of Ian Tostenson, head of the B.C. Restaurant and

Foodservices Association, brought me to tears — to know that people facing violence are not alone. This is such a hard topic for all of us to talk about.

He said: “A person facing domestic or sexual violence needs and deserves any support their community can offer them. Paid leave will make it easier, especially for people with children, to escape abusive situations. Our membership has expressed concern about affordability, but we all agree that we, as a part of our wider community, have a responsibility to help people escape abuse in any way we can.” I thank him for those words.

As part of our ten-year housing plan, our government is investing \$734 million to build 1,500 homes for women, providing that safe place to move away from the violence and get on with their lives. In Courtenay-Comox, our government and our community support the work of the Comox Valley Transition Society. They operate a safe shelter and 32 units of provincially subsidized homes. Today, we’re looking forward to 40 units of second-stage housing that were recently approved by B.C. Housing for development, and the society is, of course, planning for more. In the Comox Valley Transition Society, family services and other programs provide counselling and supports to address and end gender-based violence.

There is help. If you are, or someone you know, is in danger, call 911. You can also call or text VictimLink B.C., 24-7, at 1-800-563-0808. These 16 days set aside to act to end gender-based violence is a good place for all of us to start.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member. I dare not cut you off.

J. Tegart: Thank you to the member for Vancouver-Kensington for bringing the motion forward.

We are blessed to work in a House of gender-diverse members where we strive to build a province free of barriers for its citizens, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation or identity. It is crucial that we recognize the 16 days, and the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, but we must also recognize that this is a conversation we must actively engage in all year round, in all public and private spaces and in our public institutions, as we go forward.

[11:30 a.m.]

Our schools are one of our most crucial public institutions. They are not only responsible for the education of our children, but play an important role in their care and upbringing through some of the most formative years of their lives. Our experiences in schools stay with us long into adulthood and can shape the way we perceive the world and our relationship with others.

Far too often, young women and gender-diverse individuals become victims of misogyny, sexism, bullying, abuse and even physical and sexual violence in our schools and public institutions. Young students can often pick up

these cues and beliefs through social media, television, in their homes or in public spaces and bring them into our schools. These thoughts can have horrific consequences on the well-being of the people these beliefs are perpetrated against.

There is already a movement throughout our education system where schools are building better tools, resources and plans to help education in helping young students to understand. Sexual orientation and gender identity, known as SOGI, is built to have more inclusive environments and enforce a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying, stigmatization, hate or violence against any student, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The SOGI 123 education network has grown to be found in all 60 of B.C.’s school districts. So much to be proud of. It provides staff and students with a three-step approach to help teach and learn about building safer and more inclusive learning spaces through policies and procedures that explicitly reference SOGI, building inclusive learning environments, including SOGI-inclusive signage, word choices and extracurricular opportunities, and providing lesson plans that teach diversity and respect and include examples that reflect students’ lives in the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

We must build more inclusive spaces for all. Our schools help to teach, model and encourage positive social behaviours that contribute to the school community, solve problems in a peaceful way, value diversity, and defend human rights. Our valued educators and administrators work to create learning spaces that have zero tolerance for any kind of behaviour that may encourage or inspire sexism and gender-based violence, but we as parents also have a responsibility to enforce those values in our homes, to show our children that they must build a more inclusive community both within and outside of our schools and classrooms.

The safety of our young students must always be a top priority for our learning institutions and our communities. That includes their mental health and well-being. Far too often, victims of bullying, abuse and gender-based violence feel that they have nowhere to turn, and the incidents they have experienced often go unreported in our schools. This must end. Students should not only feel safe at school but also safe to report. We must also recognize the incredible barriers and challenges young women and gender-diverse individuals around the world continue to face today. It is a difficult subject matter, but for us to spend an hour today is an hour well spent.

H. Yao: I fully support the motion of the member for Vancouver-Kensington: “Be it resolved that this House reaffirm our commitment to fighting sexism and misogyny as we recognize the 30th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign and beyond.”

[11:35 a.m.]

Before I start, I would like to take a moment to acknowledge all the members who spoke before me and to thank them for sharing their vulnerabilities and expressing their championing of the effort against gender-based violence. I also want to thank the individuals in my life who approached me and, in the hope of combatting racism and hate, humbly acknowledged their own ignorance, seeking an opportunity to learn from my culture and ethnicity and expressing a desire to better themselves. I hope today that my words and my actions honour those individuals.

I want to first acknowledge I am ignorant when it comes to gender-based violence, and I wish to learn more. I sincerely hope to find a way to learn and appreciate the harm and negative impact of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence itself is not just something physical, but it's also psychologically violating or oppressing many members of our community.

A community member of mine approached me earlier this year. Her spouse is verbally abusive. He regularly criticizes the way she dresses as too revealing or inappropriate for her age. She has a thriving career; however, he continually plays down her employment and tries to convince her not to work. For her own sanity, she sleeps in a different room, yet from time to time he will confront her on things she wrote in her personal journal and documentation which are locked away in her own room. He takes pictures of her when she's physically relaxed or vulnerable and threatens her with the idea of releasing the photos. When they get into arguments he throws objects at her and curses her in front of her children.

When I asked her, "Have you reported this to the police yet?" she had a confused look on her face and said: "Why?" She explained to me that, due to a lack of physical evidence, the police won't believe her and that due to the fact that her husband never physically assaulted her, she does not deem that as gender-based violence.

That really troubled me. Her assumption demonstrated a lack of understanding in our community when it comes to gender-based violence. Many, unfortunately, due to the lack of understanding, continue to be victims of gender-based violence.

I further want to talk a bit about toxic masculinity, which is commonly portrayed in our entertainment in my community. They often explain how wives should be treated at home, marking women as emotional and not intellectual and, therefore, not worth listening to. Sometimes they even mention that a woman should be quiet, fragile and servant-like.

Many in my community often are bombarded with a perverse measure of self-esteem in entertainment. In my community, television shows about love often portray the ideal man as a young, powerful, abusive CEO with unlimited money. The ideal man should never have to listen. He can say anything and everything, and it must be taken based on its face value. He continually demonstrates his worthiness by showcasing his power, authority and money,

while she is supposed to be demonstrating that he is rescuing her and that she is benefiting from his aggressive behaviours. This is not just a theme. It is a common, preferred trend for TV shows.

I do want to emphasize I use gender dichotomy in my speech to reflect the gender biases in much of our entertainment. I also want to mention that I have a lovely daughter — who, I wish, when she grows up, will be able to find whom she loves and will be able to be loved for who she is.

While different platforms or media keep entertaining, away from solving toxic masculinity and gender-based violence, I, like all parents, wish our children can grow up to be resilient and strong and will be able to discover themselves, based on their terms, free from social discrimination, and pursue their hopes and dreams. I also hope my daughter will never lose her right to her own body, is always respected by others as a human being, instead of as an object or a subject, and lives a dignified life where she's able to embrace herself through her self-determination.

Therefore I — as a son, as a brother, as a father, as a friend and, most of all, a spouse to my wife — am committed to being an ally against toxic masculinity and gender-based violence. Therefore, I am encouraging members of our community that it is time for a paradigm shift — a paradigm shift that continuously focuses on moving our society into the 21st century, where we as individuals can continue to find ways to promote equity, fairness and justice for everyone on the gender spectrum. Thank you for having given me the opportunity to share my willingness to be an ally against gender-based violence.

[11:40 a.m.]

K. Kirkpatrick: I'm proud to rise in this House to support the motion today.

The MLA for Richmond South Centre brings up a very important topic which I wasn't going to speak about, but it got me thinking of the importance of supporting women and others who, we know, are suffering and are scared and don't know what to do when they're living in a home with somebody who is actually their abuser. The importance that when we see these things happening.... I know the MLA for Richmond South Centre has been in the social services sector.

I know you have worked hard to support vulnerable people, and just the importance of making sure that we all reach out when we're aware of these things and make sure that those people are getting support.

I will speak a bit about what some others have spoken about, but I think this is the kind of topic that bears repeating so that we truly understand the extent of the issues that women continue to deal with today.

Every year from November 25, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to December 10, world Human Rights Day, we observe 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. This year is the

30th anniversary, and the theme is: “Orange the world; end violence against women now.”

It’s time to renew our commitment, as the COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the issue of violence against women and girls. The United Nations has called this the shadow pandemic, while a report by the WHO this year estimated that one in three women in the world has been subjected to either physical or intimate partner violence and non-partner violence. The pandemic saw many women trapped at home with their abusers during lockdowns, making them even more vulnerable and their children vulnerable.

There’s so much more that we need to do to raise awareness about the prevention and elimination of gender-based violence around the world and to give women safe ways to leave that violence.

Now, Canada is certainly not immune to sexism and misogyny. We still remember and mourn the loss of 14 young women who were murdered, based on hatred and misogyny, simply because they were women, at École Polytechnique de Montréal in December 1989. As a young person in 1989, I had a hard time understanding what had happened and why. It was the first time my eyes were truly opened to the reality and consequence of gender-based hatred.

I spoke in the House before, I believe, about a time when I had won an award in high school. I was very proud of it. I won the Canadian citizenship award because I had written an essay about how proud I was to be a Canadian. The irony. I came back from Ottawa, and I was asked by this business group to come and talk at their lunch, to tell them how I was so proud to be a Canadian. I had to sit in a different room and have my lunch. They brought me in, because it was an all-men’s club, and then I had to leave immediately afterwards.

So I am proud to be a Canadian, but I am certainly prouder now that I can go in the front door of all of the clubs in downtown Vancouver.

Statistics show that anyone in Canada can experience violence. Women and girls; Indigenous women and girls; lesbian, gay and bisexual people; those living with disabilities; and those in rural communities are at greatest risk. Then there are those women, as well as the statistics we’ve heard.... The vast majority of police-reported sexual assaults are of women. But there are so many women who are too scared, too humiliated or threatened to actually even report that violence. The number is much bigger than we’re actually aware.

These aren’t just numbers. They tell us how women are still being left behind in so many aspects of their life.

What we don’t see in these statistics are the ripple effects. Not only does this impact women; it impacts their children. It impacts their ability to earn a living.

Something else I think is important.... Again, it goes to what I was saying about being able to support women who are leaving violent situations. We have to do more to

support women through the criminal justice system and the justice system as victims of domestic violence. Often there are not prosecutions, because often these women are too scared to continue on through the system and actually seek those prosecutions. The more that we can do to support women during this, the better we will all be.

I sure went off-book a lot here. Now I’m on my....

All people, regardless of gender, must support women to live their lives free of violence and fear with the belief that women can accomplish anything.

[11:45 a.m.]

J. Sims: Normally, I would start off by saying it’s a pleasure to stand up and speak, but today I must say it’s with a heavy heart that I say I am standing up to speak on the motion that has been brought forward to support the ending of gender-based violence.

We know these are the 16 days of action. Once again, I will start off by saying it also saddens me to say that we have to have 16 days of action when there should be 365 days of action.

Here we are, a lot older than many of you in the room. I’m finding it very hard to stand up here today and speak about this issue, hoping that in 2021, I would not be standing up to talk about ending gender-based violence.

It’s not news to anybody in this room. I’m a mother, I’m a grandmother, and I’m a great-grandmother to a beautiful great-granddaughter and a beautiful granddaughter. I’m also a sister and a daughter and an aunt and a friend. Like everybody in this room, every one of us knows and has talked with or shared with people who have been victims of domestic violence.

As I feel the emotion in this room, it points to how hard it is to talk about this issue, because it’s not an academic issue. This is a very personal and a very emotional issue because violence, when it’s inflicted on someone, physical and sexual.... Yes, it does that physical harm, but it leaves behind it a trail of agony, betrayal and pain that that person has to live with and that is triggered by many things in their lives.

Today I do want to acknowledge women, girls who have been victims of sexual domestic violence and say that though we cannot undo what happened to them, every one of us who is elected and sits in this chamber, the people’s House, is going to do everything we can to eliminate gender-based violence.

I heard from both sides of the House very moving speeches, heartfelt, so I know every one of us wants to do this. I know we are all committed, so now let us continue this fight, because it is a fight.

Where do we start? I would say it’s not where do we start but how do we continue, in the face of the fact that in 2021, in British Columbia alone, every week there are 1,000 women who are victims of sexual and physical violence? Mr. Speaker, let us all have that sink in — 1,000 in B.C. alone.

As a previous colleague said, those are only the reported numbers. I would guess, and this is based on my grey-haired experience, that for every person who's reporting, there are probably seven who are not reporting — out of fear, out of lack of information how to, out of shame and out of being coerced by family members: "Please don't do this; what is it going to do to our family?"

[11:50 a.m.]

Mr. Speaker, I haven't started on my speech, but I know that my five minutes are up.

Let us, each and every one of us, make that commitment today, because my daughter, my granddaughter and my great-granddaughter and all girls deserve to live in a world free of violence.

G. Kylo: It is an honour today to rise and to speak to this very important motion: "Be it resolved that this House reaffirm our commitment to fighting sexism and misogyny as we recognize the 30th anniversary of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign and beyond."

This event serves as a bridge between two other extremely important international observances: the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25 and the Human Rights Day, which falls on December 10.

Issues of violence against women and sexist and misogynistic attitudes towards women are deeply significant to me as a father of four daughters and six strong and mighty granddaughters. But we need not think that these issues are important only in relation to the girls and women we know and interact with in our lives. The rights they demand, the rights they deserve are basic human rights that all people should have.

It's incumbent on all of us to think about how we can achieve that in our society and in our world for those who feel less than, for those who are told they can't be who they want to be or cannot do the things that others can, for those who have to work twice as hard as everyone else to achieve similar outcomes, for those who feel unsafe in their communities and even in their own homes.

Sadly, that is one reality that has become more clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past year and a half, we've all been subject to periods of isolation at home. For most of us, it's an inconvenience to be stuck inside, to be a bit bored or lacking a few supplies, but we make the best of it by ourselves or with the ones we love.

For some women, however, quarantining at home with their abuser is an absolute nightmare. They may be subjected to increasing physical, verbal, emotional or sexual abuse, with even fewer people around them to notice or to intervene. Under these circumstances, it becomes ever more important for all of us to watch out for signs of abuse being experienced by the women that are around us. Sometimes those signs are obvious and visible. Other times they're quite subtle.

The other thing that we can do is to offer our support in a discreet manner to help women flee these dangerous situations.

In my riding of Shuswap, the Shuswap Area Family Emergency Society, SAFE Society, has provided safe, non-judgmental services to those experiencing intimate partner violence or other forms of abuse, for more than 40 years. Services are provided in the communities of Salmon Arm, Sicamous, Sorrento, North and South Shuswap and surrounding area. The SAFE Society provides emergency shelter and transition housing to women and their children experiencing a crisis and seeking support services.

I might add that these services are provided at no cost.

Support workers provide crisis intervention, emotional support, safety planning, and they assist with finding secure, safe housing in the community for a length of stay of up to 30 days. Their crisis line number is 250-832-9616, or women can visit their website at safesociety.ca and send a private message to help obtain help.

I want to provide my sincere appreciation to SAFE Society, along with the other organizations undertaking this very important work across our province, as well as the many volunteers provincewide who are there in these critical times of need.

I might reflect that near 20 years ago my wife, Georgina, and I opened up our home to a young lady, a young mother of two young daughters who was fleeing domestic violence. I can tell you the amount of stress, the trauma, the fear, the anxiety, the heartache, the financial hardships that were experienced, not just by this young mother but by her children as well, were significant.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

I'm happy to report that there was a happy outcome. After about four months, this young lady was able to find her own accommodation and move on with her life. But for many, they don't have that opportunity. They don't have those necessary supports.

[11:55 a.m.]

I am encouraging all of those that are listening at home to please be vigilant, to watch out and to stand up for the rights of women.

We must take much pause and reflection over these 16 days and beyond on how we as individuals can do more to prevent and reduce violence, sexism and misogyny in our communities and create a society that is safer and more equitable for everyone.

G. Lore: A commitment to fighting the sexism and misogyny that underpins gender-based violence — yes, every day. A commitment also to fight historic and persistent colonialism, racism, ableism, anti-sex work sentiment, homophobia and transphobia that make some women and gender-diverse people more frequently targeted with violence and less able to access services and safety.

As my colleague noted, an estimated 1,000 women are physically or sexually assaulted every week in British Columbia. Nationally, femicide occurs once every six days, and Indigenous women are killed at nearly seven times the rate. Women with disabilities are three times more likely to be targeted with violence.

We have work to do, and I am committed to doing that work. I am incredibly proud to stand as Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity with a government committed to this work. I don't say this lightly.

I have worked on the front lines — middle of the night calls to walk beside a survivor as they navigate medical care, police reporting and crisis emotional support.

I have worked with the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre, who created Canada's only integrated sexual assault clinic where survivors can access all of these services in one safe, accessible, trauma-informed location. This service was opened in 2016 and was developed in collaboration with police, Crown counsel and nurses. It was creativity and commitment to survivors that brought this to life, not through government but in spite of it. It represents continual work to put survivors at the centre of services in a sector that was gutted and abandoned. That's not how we're going to live up to this commitment.

With an unprecedented and transformative \$20 million investment in emergency sexual assault services with the Ending Violence Association of B.C., our government not only protected this and other services around the province with multi-year funding but supported communities in creating new services where they were needed. These are not just numbers. These are critical services. This is care. This is survivors' lives.

The Kamloops Sexual Assault Counselling Centre expanded their domestic violence and sexual assault response team to be 24-7, so survivors needing care are not on their own ever. The centre had offered this service around the clock in the past, but in 2001, funding was cut. It was, as they put it, devastating.

In Salmon Arm, an expansion of services also means that survivors in this community are supported in accessing health care and police reporting 24 hours a day.

Through this funding, the Alberni Valley has a new emergency sexual assault response team. Since starting just this summer, they've supported 15 survivors, most of whom would have otherwise been alone navigating health care, police reporting and supports. The vast majority of survivors supported are Indigenous, and many were also unhoused. These survivors deserve support and trauma-informed care.

Across communities, we are committed to making sure care is there for survivors when they need it. Half of that funding is dedicated to services by and for Indigenous communities.

In Williams Lake, the Yeqox Nilin Justice Society victim services provides emergency sexual assault response in seven rural, isolated and remote communities.

The Tahltan emergency sexual assault response services project provides culturally safe and relevant emergency supports, access to medical assistance, support networks, safety planning and more.

This is transformative change to this sector. This is investing in community-based expertise and compassion. This is survivor-centred, and it's trauma-informed care. And it is just part of the work we're doing.

One year ago we supported WISH in opening Canada's first-ever 24-7 emergency shelter for street-based sex workers — 23 beds. Over that year, 119 sex workers had access to a safe place to stay, hot showers, meals and more.

And \$2 million to support the incredible work of the Moose Hide Campaign, led by Raven and Paul Lacerte, rooted in and guided by Indigenous cultural teachings and challenging men and boys to join in this work.

[12:00 p.m.]

We changed language in several pieces of legislation that required an intent to harm to establish gender-based violence. Especially when protecting trans kids, an abuser's intent is not an excuse.

I wish I had ten, 20, 30 minutes, because the work done is incredible, and the work before us is significant: a gender-based violence action plan; standards for sexual assault response; core funding for sexual assault services; and a commitment across government to gender equity, anti-racism and reconciliation.

Starting on Nov. 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, and for 16 days, I ask everyone in this House to join me in pledging action in their own lives, in their communities and in the work they do in this building to end gender-based violence and support and stand with survivors.

Mr. Speaker: Member, please move the adjournment of debate.

G. Lore 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 12:01 p.m.

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