



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
of BRITISH COLUMBIA

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THE HONOURABLE RAJ CHOUHAN, SPEAKER

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PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR

Her Honour the Honourable Janet Austin, OBC

FOURTH SESSION, 42ND PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Raj Chouhan

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THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 2023

The House met at 10:01 a.m.

Clerk of the Legislative Assembly: Hon. Members, it's my duty to advise you of the unavoidable absence of the Speaker.

Consequently, and pursuant to Standing Order 12, the Deputy Speaker will take the chair.

[S. Chandra Herbert in the chair.]

[10:05 a.m.]

Routine Business

Prayers and reflections: J. Tegar.

Introductions by Members

A. Singh: In the House today, we have my good friend Erin Haskett up in the gallery, who has joined us for Creative B.C. week. Erin is a president and executive producer of Lark Productions, with over 20 years of experience developing and producing exceptional content like *Family Law* and *Motive*. She is also the chair of the Canadian Media Producers Association and national board of directors.

Please welcome her.

K. Greene: Joining us today in the gallery is my favourite oldest son, William. He's in grade 8. He's smart and kind, and we love watching *Beat Bobby Flay* together.

Please make him feel welcome.

Hon. N. Cullen: I have two members of my team joining us today — one leaving, unfortunately, and one joining. Quinn MacTavish has worked with us for a number of months and is going off to Queen's University to get even smarter than he already is. He has witnessed question periods live right across this country but apparently not British Columbia's until today, which is, of course, a unique site.

Lauren Reid is joining us as well. She has just joined our team from Vancouver. I'm very excited to have her on the team, and I wish Quinn the very best of luck in the future.

Would the House join me in making them feel welcome.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

BILL M221 — MEMBERS' CONFLICT OF
INTEREST AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

S. Furstenau presented a bill intituled Members' Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2023.

S. Furstenau: I move that a bill intituled the Members' Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper, be introduced and read a first time now.

Trust is a critical component of democracy. Without trust, without the public's ability to rely on their elected leaders to represent the public interest, the health of democracy is imperiled. Danielle Allen, the author of *Justice by Means of Democracy*, explains this so well. "The work of democracy," she says, "is to endlessly resist capture."

For too long, B.C. had been dubbed the Wild West of corporate influence. Several years ago we worked hard to update our lobbying legislation to ensure that corporate influence on our assembly and on functions of government was more transparent and was mitigated. We banned corporate and union donations to keep big money out of politics. Since those changes, other loopholes in B.C. legislation have come to light. But the work to resist capture cannot stop.

The Members' Conflict of Interest Amendment Act updates the act, which safeguards against conflicts of interest among members of this assembly. Our provincial act is sorely out of line with jurisdictions across the country. We have seen the consequences as the relationships between large corporations and this assembly are perceived by the public to have overruled the public interest. To be frank, that perception is not unfounded.

This legislation modernizes the Members' Conflict of Interest Act by setting out time limits for former members of this assembly before they can enter into contracts of service, accept board appointments or accept employment positions with organizations where such an activity could take improper advantage of the member's former office. For former members, the time limit is set at 12 months. For members of the executive council, the time is set at 24 months.

Finally, one additional change increases the fine for contravention of the act. Currently that is \$5,000, which is small compared to other jurisdictions. For that reason, this amendment act adopts a fine used in Alberta's Conflicts of Interest Act and raises that fine to \$50,000.

Deputy Speaker: The question is first reading, of course, of the bill.

Motion approved.

[10:10 a.m.]

S. Furstenau: I move that the bill be placed on the orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill M221, Members' Conflict of Interest Amendment Act, 2023, introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

**Statements
(Standing Order 25B)**

EARTH DAY

K. Kirkpatrick: Earth Day marks the anniversary of the birth of the modern environmental movement. On April 22, the world will come together to celebrate our Earth, its bounty and our obligation to care for it. We need to talk about the toll of climate change and the causes of it. We need to act for our planet and for our children.

Today I'd like us to think about the joy our Earth and nature bring us and how we can connect more closely with it. I'm going to start with a poem by Jane Yolen.

I am the Earth
And the Earth is me.
Each blade of grass,
Each honey tree,
Each bit of mud
And stick and stone
Is blood and muscle,
Skin and bone.
And just as I
Need every bit
Of me to make
My body fit,
So Earth needs
Grass and stone and tree
And things that grow here
Naturally.
That's why we
Celebrate this day.
That's why across
The world we say:
As long as life,
As dear, as free,
I am the Earth
And the Earth is me.

This year's theme is "Invest in our planet." It's important to have a special day to help us stop and think about our relationship with Earth. But every day should be Earth Day. So although we get together and participate in many wonderful things, like local cleanups, and we plant trees in our community, we need to also think each day of the products that we buy and the kilometres that we drive.

I will end also with part of a poem. It's actually a 64-page poem. But since my time here is limited, I'm just going to move to the last line of the poem.

At the end of *The Lorax*, Dr. Seuss writes: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

FLORCHITA "CHIT" BAUTISTA

M. Elmore: Florchita Bautista, now a seniors advocate in Vancouver, spent her younger years in the Philippines under the Marcos dictatorship as a progressive religious nun, living a preferential option for the poor, particularly for the workers, the urban poor and the Indigenous peoples in the Cordillera. She was a member of the

Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and worked as a teacher, guidance counsellor and, later, as a pastoral worker in the various mission sites of the congregation.

She left the Philippines as a layperson in the 1980s to come to Canada, where she spent her time organizing live-in caregivers in Toronto, helping raise their awareness about their rights as temporary workers in Canada. In 1989, she established AWARE.

She's also a film-maker and, with Marie Boti of Productions Multi-Monde, the two women collaborated to make documentary films describing the real situation of workers in Canadian homes — *Brown Women, Blonde Babies* in 1991 and *When Strangers Reunite* in 1999.

Florchita moved to Vancouver in 2001. In 2011, Migrante B.C. held its first assembly and nominated and acclaimed seven members to the Migrante B.C. coordinating collective: Ana Cagas-Tabella, Florchita Bautista, Leo Alejandria, Vivien Oropel, Juliet Rivada, Marjorie Eda and Jane Ordinario.

She's also a founding member of the Canada Philippines Solidarity for Human Rights, which was founded in 2008, and a writer. She wrote her autobiography, *Leaping into the Unknown!*, in 2006, where she recounted a life full of adventures. And 13 years later, she published *Interviews Across Time and Space*, where she relived some of these experiences in fictionalized conversations with biblical figures.

In her mid-80s, she has dedicated her life to social justice. Florchita continues to inspire as a community organizer, facilitator, teacher, researcher, author, film-maker, seniors advocate, as well as a generous friend and auntie to all who know and love her.

She is much loved.

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT AT NICOLA
VALLEY HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CENTRE

J. Tegart: When community members come together under a common goal and purpose, they can achieve great things. That spirit is typical of the people of Fraser-Nicola and, in this case, the city of Merritt.

[10:15 a.m.]

Years ago it became apparent that local health care facilities needed an expansion and upgrade to meet increased demand and to address aging infrastructure and equipment. Recognizing that the ER at the Nicola Valley Hospital and Health Centre was designed to support the community's needs half a century ago, a process got underway to build a bigger and more modern emergency department.

Noting Merritt's location at the intersection of four busy highways and the need for high-quality health care services not only for current residents but to attract future residents as well, the people of Merritt were fully behind this plan, generously contributing their time, energy and

funds to make it happen through the Nicola Valley Health Care Endowment Foundation and the Nicola Valley Health Care Auxiliary.

Boy, did they come through in a big way, better than anyone expected. They raised a whopping \$700,000 to help make this much-needed facility a reality to improve local health care services and to benefit their community at large. It was an impressive feat, one that still astounds me today.

We often talk about how rural people are strong and resilient, and that is true. But after all that work, just imagine how frustrated they are to find themselves on protest lines after ten ER closures in less than four months.

CREATIVE INDUSTRIES WEEK

M. Dykeman: It's a privilege today to rise in the House in recognition of Creative Industries Week in British Columbia. This week celebrates the contributions of our province's creative industries, which include the motion picture industry, music, interactive and digital media and, of course, book and magazine publishing.

We are fortunate to have a wealth of creative talent and infrastructure to support a thriving creative sector here in British Columbia, which makes us a global leader in a sector that drives our economy and creates prosperity for everyone.

We are one of the largest motion picture hubs in Canada and North America. We are the second-largest English-language book publishing market and the third-largest centre for music in the country. We are also home to one of the world's largest animation and visual effects clusters and the second-largest video games workforce in Canada — all of this with the support of Creative B.C., which is B.C.'s independent, not-for-profit agency that has been developing our creative sector for ten years.

That's why we're so pleased to support the continued growth of British Columbia's creative industries with the announcement yesterday of a historic investment of \$42 million. Every year the industry associations come together to celebrate the people who work in B.C.'s creative sector, offer a range of entertaining activities and raise awareness about the valuable work that they do.

Over the past week, the building was filled with energy, and I've had a fantastic time attending events and learning more about local artists and businesses. Special thanks to our key partners: Canadian Media Producers Association, B.C. branch; Motion Picture Production Industry Association; Association of Book Publishers of B.C.; DigiBC; the Animation and VFX Alliance of B.C.; Music B.C.; and the Magazine Association of B.C.

I ask the House to join me today in celebrating Creative Industries Week. To my colleagues, I encourage you to check out BCCreates.com, which includes an interactive map that allows you to identify local creators in your region.

I encourage everyone to buy, promote and share the work of B.C.'s creators.

COVID-19 IMPACTS AND SOCIAL INEQUALITY

A. Olsen: When the COVID-19 pandemic began three years ago, it drew the inequalities of our world into the daylight.

Disproportionately, it was racialized workers who became ill and died, because they were more likely to work in low-paid jobs deemed essential when everyone else was told to stay home. Gender inequalities in the household work and layoffs emerged. It was called a she-cession. The gap between the rich and the poor grew. Where gender and race and disability intersected, the impacts were all the more complex and challenging.

A lot has changed since the outset of the pandemic. In British Columbia, many of our job losses have been regained. But we all know jobs are not all created equal, and we know our province remains a deeply inequitable place. While a few individuals in corporations swim in windfall profits, many are growing increasingly desperate because of the cost of living, the housing crisis, the toxic drug crisis, the impact of extreme weather events.

[10:20 a.m.]

We celebrate the hard-won battles of workers throughout history. Workers are why we have a weekend, why we have a minimum wage, why we have the right to refuse unsafe work. Workers, people, organized and fought for these wins.

These wins do not absolve us from the responsibility we have to address inequality and inequity. We must challenge the notion that a small step towards pay equity is good enough. We should not sit idly by, accepting that the burden be unfairly carried for yet another generation.

Today our fights are for pay equity, housing as a human right and clean air in the workplace, demanding the government decide with people instead of corporations.

Even as the banners in this House change, it seems the fights remain the same.

COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS BY COQUITLAM EXPRESS HOCKEY TEAM

F. Donnelly: I'm a big fan of our BCHL team, the Coquitlam Express, not just for their on-ice skills but for the way they contribute back to our community.

Under the inspired leadership of general manager Tali Campbell, the Express has put together an impressive lineup of community service from their anti-bullying campaign "See something, do something," encouraging people to take positive action when they encounter bullying, to hosting their first ever Pride night to drive social change and foster inclusivity. Tali said: "Everyone has the right to

feel accepted, and we have a duty to our players, our fans and ourselves to be the voice of acceptance.”

Last season Express captain Ryan Tattle raised nearly \$95,000 for cancer research as part of his final Junior A hockey season. His teammates raised over \$20,000 by auctioning special game-worn jerseys. Also, last season the Coquitlam Express honoured our Indigenous roots with a special jersey worn by players in the game promoted as Kwikwetlem First Nation night.

Their good work continued this season with each player choosing a charity of choice to support by volunteering, donating and promoting that charity. In February, the team partnered with Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and Diabetes Canada to host a diabetes awareness game. Players wore specially designed jerseys that were auctioned off after the game to raise money for diabetes.

In March, they hosted their second annual Hockey Talks mental health awareness game, where groups distributed information to fans about mental health resources available in our community.

This was followed by their autism acceptance game, where a more sensory-friendly game experience was created. The music volume was lowered, the horn was not used, and a designed quiet room was provided for those needing a break from the sensory-rich hockey game environment.

The Coquitlam Express are true community champions for making their players better citizens and for making our community a better, more inclusive place to live.

Hon. S. Robinson: I seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

Hon. S. Robinson: As you may well know, we have a special birthday in the House. The Minister of Health is now as old as I am, and I want to welcome him into his 60th year. Can the House please wish him....

I want to clarify. He's not 60 yet. He is just starting his 60th year.

Deputy Speaker: Shots fired.

Oral Questions

ACTION ON ANTI-SEMITISM AND ADOPTION OF IHRA DEFINITION

K. Falcon: Anti-Semitism is on the rise in Canada, more than doubling in the past decade. Despite representing just over 1 percent of the Canadian population, the Jewish community is the target of a staggering 56 percent of all reported hate crimes in the country.

In British Columbia, last year alone there were 51 cases

of vandalism, 53 incidents of harassment, violent attacks and 137 cases of online hate. To combat this serious problem, we need a crystal-clear and comprehensive understanding of what constitutes anti-Semitism.

[10:25 a.m.]

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance has brought forward a definition of anti-Semitism based on the lived experiences of Jews around the world and provides a strong framework for identifying and fighting this insidious form of hate.

My question to the Premier is simple. Will he stand up and adopt the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism here in British Columbia?

Hon. S. Robinson: I appreciate the Leader of the Opposition asking the question. As a Jewish member of this caucus and as a Jewish member of this House, I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about the challenges of hatred and racism and anti-Semitism. In fact, this has been work that we started as a government in 2017, identifying ways to address and combat anti-Semitism and racism and mitigate their impacts.

I'm very proud to say that working together with CIJA, the Canadian Israel and Jewish Affairs organization, under the leadership of the previous Premier, John Horgan, this government has adopted and is working with the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. As a government, we've adopted it, because the federal government has adopted it as well, in demonstrating leadership.

We're joining all these other jurisdictions in making sure that that's the functional definition of anti-Semitism here in British Columbia.

K. Falcon: The only problem with that answer is they haven't adopted it into law. It's important that when we take a stand against hate, violence and anti-Semitism, we have to do so with courage. It takes more than mere words. It calls for concrete, legislative action.

Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and, as the member noted, the federal government indeed have all taken concrete steps to protect Jewish communities by formally adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of anti-Semitism. For years, Jewish groups have been asking this B.C. government to follow suit and formally adopt the definition, including B'nai Brith in a letter to the Premier just earlier this week.

The IHRA definition is world-leading as a clear and comprehensive example of what anti-Semitism means. Refusing to formally adopt that IHRA definition through legislation sends an unmistakable message in the face of a growing rise of hate, bigotry and prejudice against the Jewish community.

Again, will the Premier listen to the voices of Holocaust survivors and their descendants, follow the lead of the federal government and take immediate legislative action to

formally adopt the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism right here in British Columbia?

Hon. S. Robinson: As I've stated in this House, this government has adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. We recognize....

Interjections.

Hon. S. Robinson: They really have a hard time listening to answers. I don't quite understand what their challenge is.

We've been working together with the organized Jewish community, making sure that we understand and that we hear their voices about how to best proceed around this. I know that CIJA is very supportive of the work that we have been doing not just around adopting IHRA as our definition for how to work and address anti-Semitism but our work to invest in Holocaust education, because we know how important that is.

We've been investing in the public schools. We've been investing in and supporting the JCC. I think that that's also critically important. We've delivered \$25 million as a government to make sure that the Jewish Community Centre can redevelop and help continue to educate British Columbians about the impacts of the Holocaust and to address the root causes of anti-Semitism, because we know how important that is.

M. Lee: I certainly recognize what is occurring within the Jewish community, including in my riding of Vancouver-Langara and the JCC, the Jewish Community Centre, as the minister just responded to. But the problem with that response is that it omits some pretty significant facts about where this government has been, including the Premier's personal, active opposition to adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism here in B.C.

[10:30 a.m.]

For years, I have urged this government to formally adopt that definition in B.C., which led to the creation of an internal government briefing note dated May 26, 2022. That briefing note, accessed under FOI, makes it very clear that the multiculturalism and anti-racism branches of government received specific direction from the then Attorney General not to adopt the IHRA definition. He personally intervened to direct that the definition not be formally adopted through legislation in B.C.

The question is simple. Why did the Premier personally block the adoption of the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in B.C. through legislation?

Hon. S. Robinson: Well, first of all, I have to say we'd already adopted it. We had already adopted it.

Interjections.

Hon. S. Robinson: Again, they really do have a hard time listening to an answer.

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Please proceed.

Hon. S. Robinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, we had already formally taken a look at the definition. We've engaged with CIJA. We've created policy about how we are working forward with this.

Interjection.

Hon. S. Robinson: Again the Leader of the Opposition continues to interrupt me, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand what's so hard about listening to an answer.

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Members, we will have some order, please.

Hon. S. Robinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We had already taken that in as part of our work around anti-racism. We've been working closely with the organized Jewish community that let us know that was absolutely acceptable to them in terms of addressing the root causes of anti-Semitism. It works for the organized Jewish community. That's what they said would work for them, and we've worked with them to create this opportunity.

Working with community is how you get things done, and that's what we were doing — working with community.

However, I do want to point out that the people on the other side were the people who got rid of the Human Rights Commission. That shows you how much they care about people's human rights. We brought it back, because we work with community to make sure that everyone is safe, regardless of their religion, their faith, their gender, their colour.

M. Lee: In the six years that this government has been dragging its feet on adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in British Columbia, there have been nearly 1,600 anti-Semitic incidents here in our province — 1,600. Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba — all of the western provinces except for B.C. have adopted this definition in legislation across government. That is what we've been asking for.

In the same period that the letter from the former Premier was provided, which did not in any way formally adopt the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism in B.C., the Premier, in his role as the Attorney General, gave that specific direction not to adopt the definition. The briefing note, dated May 22, 2022, tells a very different story as to

the reasons for why that was not adopted. On page 2 it highlights the “difficulties of adopting the definition in the current political climate.”

Twenty-eight countries, including Canada, and every western province except B.C. have adopted the definition. The only difficult political climate is within the NDP, which not only refused to adopt the definition but also had over 40 riding associations oppose the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism during a convention 18 months ago. This opposition includes the federal ridings for the members for North Vancouver–Seymour and Burnaby North, as well as the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions and the Attorney General.

The Premier must prioritize combating hate, bigotry and prejudice against the Jewish community over internal NDP politics.

[10:35 a.m.]

Will the Premier set internal NDP politics aside and do the right thing by formally adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism here in B.C. through legislation?

Hon. S. Robinson: I have to say how hard it is as a Jewish person to sit in this place, who has been working diligently with the Jewish community — with the community — to identify how to best address anti-Semitism and to hear the member opposite suggest that this government isn’t doing that work. I take that as a personal affront, I have to say, because we have been working diligently with the community.

The community wants their government to work with them. It is exactly how we have been proceeding.

The member refers to federal ridings. Some of my colleagues are connected to federal ridings; others are not.

However, I think it’s really important.... This, I think, I want all members to listen very carefully. You need to work with the community. It is what we have been doing, and it’s what we will continue to do.

ELK VALLEY POLLUTION ISSUE AND ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

S. Furstenau: I have been reflecting on the Minister of Environment’s answers to my questions yesterday. He seemed to think that I was asking if the former Premier had lobbied him since leaving office, but that’s not what I was asking.

My question was whether the former Premier had discussed the issue of referring Teck’s pollution of the Elk Valley to the International Joint Commission while he was still Premier. What I think the public has a right to know is just how involved the former Premier was in advocating on behalf of Teck before he resigned as Premier and began negotiating with Teck about a board appointment to their spinoff company Elk Valley Resources.

I’ve read the entire FOI package. For over 12 months, two members of the Premier’s office were point on the dis-

cussion around the referral of Teck’s pollution to the IJC. In the end, two ministers sent a letter to the federal minister, arguing she not refer the selenium pollution issue to the IJC. One can logically assume that the former Premier, whose staff were point, knew this letter was being sent by his two ministers.

My question is to the Minister of Forests, the former Minister of Mines. Did he have conversations with the former Premier about whether or not to lobby the federal government to not refer the Elk Valley pollution issue to the IJC before the letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs was sent in April of 2022?

Hon. G. Heyman: There are very few issues, if any, with respect to the environment, with respect to international obligations relating to the environment, with respect to impacts of mining or work in which my ministry is engaged about which I have not had numerous discussions and meetings.

However, to the best of my recollection, I never had a discussion about the IJC with the former Premier.

Deputy Speaker: Leader of the Third Party, supplemental.

S. Furstenau: I thank the minister for a clear answer to that. It’s fascinating, because the FOI package paints a pretty clear picture.

The issue is the former senior decision-maker of this province, whose staff members from his office were heavily involved, regularly involved in the discussions around trying to prevent a company’s pollution issue being referred to the International Joint Commission.... Less than a year later, that former decision-maker announced that he is taking a position on that company’s board.

This isn’t about metallurgical coal for steel or bicycles or windmills. This is about power, influence and access, and ultimately, it’s about public trust in government and how decisions are made in this province — something that the members on that side of the House used to be very passionate about.

Forty-seven lobbying meetings. Dozens and dozens of emails from the Premier’s office about the referral to the IJC. Public expressions of frustration by First Nations on both side of the border.

[10:40 a.m.]

Deputy Speaker: Question, Member.

S. Furstenau: A letter from two ministers to the federal government, making the case against the IJC referral. And a former Premier announcing his board appointment less than 24 hours after his resignation as MLA.

My question is to the Premier. What does the Premier say to the people of British Columbia in light of this timeline and these outcomes?

Hon. G. Heyman: I gave the member a clear answer yesterday. I gave the member a clear answer today. I mean, anybody can take a sequence of events and try to connect them. But I can assure the member, and I can assure every member of this Legislature, that when positions are taken by ministers of this government or by the government as a whole, they're taken after a fulsome analysis of the issues that are under consideration.

Now, the member would have the people of British Columbia believe that, absent the International Joint Commission, no work whatsoever is being done on water quality as a result of metallurgical coal mining in the southeast of this province. That is simply not true.

What has been going on, on a regular basis, for years is consultation with the Ktunaxa, consultation with the United States state governments, consultation and discussion with academics on both sides of the border about appropriate concentrations to set water quality levels. That's the work we do. That's the work we're continuing to do. That's the work to which we are absolutely committed.

We're committed to fast-track that work — the acceptability, the agreement of the nations, the acceptance of a proper and appropriate water quality level in the Elk Valley — so that the economy can continue to work and the fish and the people who depend on the water can continue to be safe.

An International Joint Commission doesn't accomplish that. It's the work with scientists, nations and people on either side of the border that accomplishes that.

CRIME IN COMMUNITIES AND HANDLING BY JUSTICE SYSTEM

J. Rustad: For months, this Legislature has been hearing about the official opposition asking questions about violent offenders, and government, of course, has been responding with programs as well as political rhetoric. But it's time to quit playing politics. It's time to quit allowing Trudeau's Liberals to handcuff this political system.

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Members, I need to hear the question.

J. Rustad: It is time to quit playing politics and to quit allowing Trudeau's federal Liberals to handcuff this government's justice system. We need to remove prolific offenders and violent offenders from our streets so that we can feel safe. I am prepared to use the notwithstanding clause to put criminals away and take back our streets.

And let me be crystal-clear. If you choose to repeatedly commit crimes or commit violent offences, I am not concerned about violating your rights; I'm concerned about getting justice for your victims.

The Premier has spent much of his law career standing

up for criminals. It's about time for this province to stand up for victims.

To the Premier: will you stand up for British Columbians and finally show that there are consequences for violent offenders?

Hon. M. Farnworth: I appreciate the question from the member. I think one of the cornerstones of our system of government is that we have the Legislature, which makes the laws, and we have an independent judicial system. I think that is the best place for our criminal justice system to do its work.

I don't believe that governments should be using the notwithstanding clause. I think what governments need to do is to work with the police agencies, the men and women who are doing the law enforcement in this province with a very difficult job. It's our job to work with those who are responsible for the Criminal Code of Canada to get the changes that are needed. It's our responsibility to work with local communities in terms of the challenges they're facing.

That's the approach that needs to be taken. That's the approach that we are taking and will continue to take.

[10:45 a.m.]

J. Rustad: I appreciate the minister's answer. The minister has talked a lot about hiring more RCMP officers, and he has also talked about creating the hubs. These are all good ideas, but with the understaffed RCMP, plus other issues, it's hard to expect results.

Let's face reality. B.C. is short more than 400 RCMP officers, and the soft number is closer to 1,500, but with 400-plus retiring annually, the RCMP recruitment is just not keeping up. Filling positions and burning out officers will be a growing problem. I know the RCMP are doing the best they can for us in this province, but the police in B.C. need help. They need help from this government.

The people want to take back our streets. Instead of pointing fingers and placing blame, when will this government put the needs of victims first and get these prolific offenders off our streets?

Hon. M. Farnworth: Again, I appreciate the question. There are a lot of questions in there to try and deal with. I will address one of the questions, or part of his question.

In terms of the recruitment and the vacancy patterns we see, it is a complicated and complex issue, involving the federal policing line, the provincial policing line and the municipal policing line, because each has a different role to play. I can tell you that when it comes to the provincial policing line, their number of vacancies — hard vacancies, not soft vacancies — is about 277. That's why we put in place the funding that we did — to fill those vacancies.

I can tell you it's not a question of the province having to go and ask for those vacancies to be filled. Those are done with the federal government. I can tell you

that my ministry has already been working with the RCMP in terms of prioritizing areas for the provincial business line. I have spoken with Minister Mendicino shortly after the announcement, in terms of the importance British Columbia places on filling that particular provincial line, the largest investment in police resources in the history of this province — in fact, one of the largest in the history of this country.

At the same time, working with local governments, I can tell the member and the community that he represents, in the case of Vanderhoof, that the municipal policing line.... We recognize that we need to ensure that we've got the recruits coming through. We get about 30 percent of the recruits out of Depot, and they go through about 900 officers a year that come through there. About 17 percent don't make it. British Columbia gets a third of that. Last year we received 258 officers.

I can tell you that we work with the federal government and the RCMP to deal with the very challenging issue of vacancies that the member has raised.

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
FOOTBALL PROGRAM

T. Halford: The abrupt closure of SFU's football program has come as a surprise to families, communities and, most importantly, the players. Everyone that has been involved with this proud program for the last half century is well aware of its significance.

Lui Passaglia, Glen Jackson, Sean Millington, Terry Bailey and John Macdonald are all players that have gone on to lead the CFL and be great community leaders.

The SFU football community is united in finding a solution. They have support from alumni and from local leaders, but we have heard nothing from this government in terms of standing up for this program and standing up for these players who are fighting to keep their season alive.

My question is to the Premier. Will he make the call, will he stand up, and will he address this with the president of SFU and get this football program reinstated today?

Hon. S. Robinson: I thank the member for the question. I have been hearing, certainly, from some of the football players and the coaches that coach in my community and who have expressed concern about the decision that SFU has made. I've also spoken with the president of SFU to understand how they are supporting these student athletes. There is tremendous disappointment. This has been a fledgling team for a number of years.

[10:50 a.m.]

The post-secondary institutions — I know the member opposite appreciates this — do operate independently of government. They have the operational responsibility of making programmatic decisions based on the best interests of the students and the student athletes.

I do understand as well that this is before the courts,

that there is a court action being taken, so it would be inappropriate for me, at this point, to say anything further on the matter.

AUTOMATED EXTERNAL DEFIBRILLATOR
ACCESS LEGISLATION

S. Bond: The Premier gave specific direction in his mandate letters to ministers, all of them, to champion good ideas, regardless of where they came from. But so far, those are just empty words.

Sudden cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time. When it does, every single minute counts. Armed with CPR and automated external defibrillators, we can double the odds of survival. That is why I have repeatedly introduced the Defibrillator Public Access Act requiring visible, registered and maintained AEDs in public buildings.

Ken Carrusca, a survivor, says this in support of the bill: "I am alive today because of an AED in a hockey arena. Simply put, AEDs save lives. We must do all we can to ensure that people like me can go home to their families."

British Columbians have no idea why a bill that has the potential to save lives, has broad support and has been introduced multiple times in this Legislature is stubbornly refused by this Premier to be called. Could the Premier stand up today and explain to British Columbians how he continues to block a debate about a bill that could save lives?

Hon. A. Dix: Like the hon. member, I'm strongly committed to a network of AEDs across B.C. It's why we work so closely, for example, with the Heart and Stroke Foundation on those issues, why we support that network with them and the growth of that network with them and why we'll continue to do that.

This, actually, continues the work that had been done under the previous government in the same regard. We continue to build out that network, and we're going to continue to do so.

I look forward.... I think there will be an occasion for us shortly, in estimates, to have a longer discussion with the member on the question. I think it's fair to say that everybody in B.C. understands and supports the growth and the effectiveness of our AED system and, you know, the education required for people, because it also will require educational support to do that.

I look forward to continuing, as I have for a number of years. The hon. member knows her intervention, and I understand the sort of community basis and where she came to her intervention and her bill.

I intend to continue to work with her and with people across the community, including the Heart and Stroke Foundation, to improve the network in B.C. That's the work that we're going to continue, and I believe that we'll continue to do together.

GOVERNMENT ACTION ON
DRUG TOXICITY CRISIS

D. Davies: More than seven years after the declaration of a public health emergency, the province continues to set one grim record after another — 2,314 deaths in 2022, a record high; 197 deaths just in March, a record for any March; a record 30-day average of overdose calls in March; highest overdose calls ever on a single day on March 22; unprecedented 19-day streak of 100-plus overdoses.

Behind every single one of those numbers is a loved one. Behind every single one of those numbers is a family that grieves. I'm one of those families. As someone who sat on the Select Standing Committee on Health, which was chaired by the now Attorney General, made up of members from both sides of the House.... We heard, firsthand, incredibly heartbreaking stories of those who have lost ones to addiction.

[10:55 a.m.]

Our committee identified gaping holes and a lack of urgency from this NDP government. I will list off the top three: rapidly scale up a flexible, evidence-based, low-barrier, comprehensive continuum of care; leverage and strengthen existing mechanisms...

Deputy Speaker: Question, Member.

D. Davies: ...to hold the health authorities accountable; and identify the touchpoints.

Six months later here we are doing the same thing over and over again and somehow expecting different results. My question to the Premier, who has chosen to ignore...

Deputy Speaker: Is there a question, Member?

D. Davies: ...the committee's recommendations and double down on more of the same....

Deputy Speaker: Question, Member.

D. Davies: Why is this Premier continuing to double down on doing the same thing and expecting different results?

Hon. J. Whiteside: I thank the member for raising the question. I want to take the opportunity to reflect on the most recent coroner's report and, of course, agree that each of these deaths is tragic. They represent our neighbours, our friends, members of our community. I know we all extend condolences to those who have lost loved ones in this unrelenting toxic drug crisis.

We have taken numerous steps to match the recommendations from the select standing committee, of course much of that work, and we are very grateful for the collaboration across this House in that work.

Those recommendations, in many respects, confirmed

work that we are doing across our health care system with our community partners — scaling up harm reduction, making harm reduction services more broadly available, working to scale up treatment opportunities, opening hundreds of beds, investing in upstream mental health services for children and youth, working across that entire continuum with an unprecedented billion-dollar investment in this budget.

We will continue to do that work with our health authorities and with our community partners. Working together, we know, is the way that we will be able to address these challenges.

[End of question period.]

Hon. G. Heyman: I seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

Hon. G. Heyman: We're honoured, today, to have joining us on the floor of this chamber the chief councillor of the Kitselas First Nation, Glen Bennett; Wilfred McKenzie, a senior adviser for the Kitselas treaty process; and Chris Apps, the director of lands and resources for the Kitselas First Nation.

They are here today to sign an agreement with me that has been enabled under our revitalized Environmental Assessment Act of 2018. It will provide for joint decision-making between the nation and the environmental assessment office and our government that will respect the governance and decision-making structures and ensure our respective decision-making structures can work together effectively in a clear and predictable manner, using the Indigenous knowledge, the values, the culture and the history of the First Nation.

Also joining us in the gallery are some of the public servants who worked so hard on bringing us to this tremendous point: Elenore Arend, associate deputy minister and chief executive assessment officer at the EAO; Danielle Smyth, executive director of Indigenous partnerships and engagement; Sheldon Foote, director of Indigenous partnerships and engagement, who negotiated the agreement for the environmental assessment office; and from the Ministry of Attorney General, Tanner Doerges, legal counsel.

Will the House please join me in making our guests very, very welcome.

Orders of the Day

Hon. L. Beare: In this chamber, I call second reading debate, Bill 18, Haida Gwaii reconciliation act.

In Committee A, continued debate on the Committee of Supply for the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastruc-

ture, to be followed by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, if that finishes.

In Committee C, continued debate on Committee of Supply for the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

Deputy Speaker: Just a moment, Minister. We'll wait until the people get to where they need to go, so you can be heard in a respectful manner. Thank you, Minister.

[11:00 a.m.]

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 18 — HAIDA NATION RECOGNITION ACT

Hon. M. Rankin: I move that Bill 18 be now read a second time.

I am honoured to rise today to support this important step in our commitment to recognize Haida governance as determined and recognized by the Haida Nation.

[R. Leonard in the chair.]

This legislation before us was jointly crafted every step of the way. It's a result of a progressive approach to reconciliation that shows the strong relationship that exists between the Council of the Haida Nation and the province of British Columbia.

It was 20 years ago that the leadership of the Haida Nation gave rise to a sea change in our laws and relationship with First Nations. The Council of the Haida Nation and Guujaaw of the Council of the Haida Nation, on his behalf and on behalf of all members of the nation, initiated a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. It resulted in a unanimous judgment that established the principles applicable to the Crown government's duty to consult.

Following that significant decision, in 2010, the Council of the Haida Nation and British Columbia entered into shared decision-making with the Haida Nation through the Haida Gwaii Reconciliation Act. It was a step toward a new relationship between the Haida Nation and our province. Brought forward in this House by the Hon. George Abbott, the legislation strived to apply what the Haida Nation had secured in the courts and established joint and shared decision-making processes for land and natural resource management on Haida Gwaii.

Under that legislation, the name Haida Gwaii was also restored. In June 2010, at a joyous celebration in Masset, the people of the Haida Nation officially returned the name Queen Charlotte Islands to British Columbia in a traditional bentwood box. Local school children received specially made globes with their birthplace identified only as Haida Gwaii, symbolizing the restoration of their history for future generations.

Our work continues. In August 2021, we entered into

the GayGahlda Changing Tide framework for reconciliation in order to advance our collective work on reconciliation. That agreement was the starting point and the guide for negotiating a number of agreements that will lead, step by step, to legal recognition of Haida governance and Haida title on Haida Gwaii.

Now, the legislation before the House today is a significant step needed to fulfil that agreement. The legislation recognizes, within provincial laws, that the Haida Nation has inherent rights of governance and self-determination. Also, the Haida Nation will act through the Council of the Haida Nation as its government.

[11:05 a.m.]

As the government of the Haida Nation, the Council of the Haida Nation will have the powers of a natural person, as provided for in this legislation. In addition, the legislation provides immunities to the Haida Nation public officials in the performance of their duties.

The legislation enables the transfer of agreements, assets, liabilities and other obligations currently held by the society called the Secretariat of the Haida Nation, which was incorporated under the B.C. Societies Act, to the Council of the Haida Nation. Eventually, that society would be dissolved.

The secretariat will continue to operate under the Council of the Haida Nation, consistent with the constitution of the Haida Nation. If approved, the legislation will be the first time that the province would provide formal legal recognition of an Indigenous governing body outside implementing a modern-day treaty.

The Haida Nation has, for 40 years, experience operating a national-level government through the Council of the Haida Nation. The Council of the Haida Nation, formed in 1974 and confirmed by its members as the Haida Nation's governing body in the 2003 constitution, has become its governing institution.

B.C. and Canada have a long-standing relationship with the Haida, developing progressive approaches to reconciliation and joint management of land and resources. Canada is expected to introduce federal companion recognition legislation within the coming year.

For British Columbia, this legislation is about changing our own colonial legal structures to recognize the Council of the Haida Nation as the governing body of the Haida Nation and Haida people, just as their own people have recognized them for decades. It's overdue that the province and Canada legally recognize the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation as its government.

Thank you, and I look forward to hearing from other members on this significant next step in our relationship with the Haida Nation.

M. Lee: I wish to speak to this very important bill, as it comes forward to the floor of the Legislative Assembly — Bill 18, Haida Nation Recognition Act.

As the minister just outlined in a good way, there's his-

tory as to how this legislation is being presented at this time. It's very important to recognize the fundamental case around title in 2002 involving the Haida, as presided over by the Supreme Court of Canada decision, which has informed much of the jurisprudence that we look at in the relationship with First Nations.

It's a demonstration, of course, of the challenges to define that relationship purely through the courts. Nations should not have to do that, but they have at various junctures in the history of our province and our country. The Haida decision in 2002 certainly is that fundamental decision which has changed much of the approach of government and other proponents, third parties in dealing with various elements around consent of a nation.

As the minister just cited, under a former government, back in 2010, a B.C. Liberal government, the Hon. George Abbott introduced important legislation into this House, the Haida Gwaii Reconciliation Act, in June of 2010.

[11:10 a.m.]

That reconciliation act set out a new relationship with the Haida Nation and certainly recognized then that the Haida Nation was represented by the Council of the Haida Nation, which, of course, is the subject of this recognition act, Bill 18.

As the minister mentioned in his second reading speech here, that important act, brought in by the Hon. George Abbott, as the member for Shuswap, had important elements of reconciliation set out, including around shared decision-making around forestry, for example — forest and range practices. It set out requirements that the council would determine the allowable annual cut, for example, at least once in every ten years after the last stated determination, as set out in the act.

As importantly, it does provide for protected areas management. We know, of course, that Haida Gwaii is a very significant part of our province in terms of the need to protect the very important marine and terrestrial lands of the Haida. That management plan included a plan to set out protection and use or management of natural resources, including wildlife and wildlife habitat, cultural or recreational values and of a protected area that's developed under the direction of the council. These are examples for that framework legislation that was in place in 2010 that had set out that new relationship and provided for the type of shared decision-making between the province and the Haida Nation.

We've seen, in the last decades in this House, various agreements and relationship agreements and governance agreements to recognize the importance of partnership with First Nations and their inherent right of self-governance. This particular bill, bridging off the Changing Tide agreement, as the minister referred to, continues that work. I know that when I had the opportunity to have discussion both with the minister's predecessor at Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation, as well as this minister in his current capacity, we've had a good discussion

around the recognition of Indigenous governing bodies in this province.

I appreciate that that term is not being utilized in this act, but as we look at governance and the relationship with First Nations in our province, this is, as the minister said, a significant next step, as the first time where the government of B.C. is recognizing a First Nation as what has been referred to as a proper government outside of the Indian Act and Societies Act, as we've seen in this context as well.

It will be important to consider with government as we get the kind of clarity around governance with the Haida.... I know, of course, that we recognize that it is for the nation themselves and the Indigenous community to determine what their governance is. There is certainly recognition that the Haida Nation is recognized in the context of its own Indigenous legal orders.

[11:15 a.m.]

We know, of course, and we recognize that the Haida Nation had passed its own constitution in 2003, which confirmed that the Council of the Haida Nation is that nation's nation-level government.

When you consider the constitution itself, which is publicly available on the Council of the Haida Nation's website, the article sets out the governance framework around the Council of the Haida Nation. It refers to the village and band councils, including, of course, Old Massett Village Council and Skidegate Band Council, and how each of those councils will elect a councillor to the Council of the Haida Nation. There's respect to the Hereditary Chiefs council that "the potlatched hereditary chiefs will assemble as the Hereditary Chiefs council to address issues of the Haida Nation," and "the hereditary chiefs will be notified of sittings of the Council of the Haida Nation and will be requested to attend."

These are examples of the composition, let's say, and the relationships of the Council of the Haida Nation, certainly to both Indian Act-recognized governance structures as well as hereditary recognized governance structures within the Haida Nation. The mandates are set out quite clearly in terms of the roles of the Council of the Haida Nation — the president, the vice-president, the executive committee, regional representatives and the sittings, as well as the secretariat.

These are the formalized structures that are in place under the Council of the Haida Nation. Again, I think it's important that we recognize the length of establishment to get to this point, the workings of the existing governance structure that is in place with the Haida Nation, and also to understand, as we look at how, for example, the Council of the Haida Nation, under its own constitution, sets out the ways in which international agreements will be dealt with, the ways that there would be discipline and removal of elected representatives, the ways in which a judicial tribunal may be convened to resolve internal conflicts.

I think this is a very important time. It's a very important time to understand, as we have this discussion and as

we recognize the further agreements with nations in this province, what the governance framework for a nation that will be formally recognized by the government of British Columbia should look like. These are the kinds of discussions that I expect we will be having at the committee stage on this bill.

When we look at the bill itself, when we talk about the immunity from legal proceedings — that there would be no legal proceedings for damages commenced or maintained against a public official, the Haida Nation, because of anything done or omitted in the exercise or intended exercise of the responsibilities of the public official — I think it demonstrates the level of governance. Again, it's the reason why I took a little time just to walk through some of the important provisions in the constitution, because I would expect the government would have that level of assessment when it sets out an immunity provision in this act.

[11:20 a.m.]

Now, I did not have the opportunity, because government brought closure in the fall to another related bill.... That bill put in place the Judicial Review Procedure Act amendments, which related to how decisions of an Indigenous governing body could be subject to judicial review under that act. As members of the opposition, we had no opportunity to ask any questions on that bill because of the closure.

I hope that we have the opportunity to understand the nature of the governance thresholds that the government expects for a nation of our province in order to have this formal recognition, because not only is there immunity under this act, but they're also subject to the Judicial Review Procedure Act.

Now, I appreciate that, as the minister and I will discuss, "Indigenous governing body" is set out in different contexts in different ways under DRIPA, but these things and these aspects are connected. They're certainly connected when we look at other Indigenous communities like the Wet'suwet'en. As we know, under their MOU with the federal and provincial governments, there is still work that's being done, important work for the Wet'suwet'en peoples, both hereditary and elected within that community, to understand and appreciate what their governance is.

It's important to consider, again, what level a nation needs to present as.... I'm trying to choose my words carefully because, again, it's not for us to say. But there is, in the sense that the nation and the community need to work that out, which is clearly what's recognized in the Wet'suwet'en MOU.

I do think it's important for any Indigenous nation and First Nation in our province to have a clear understanding as to what the expectations are as to how to get there, because that formal recognition, as this bill would be providing to the Haida Nation, is what other nations may want to get to in order to progress the relationship and to

address the kinds of further work that will be done with the government in this province.

I know that, with this recognition, we will have a greater opportunity for that nation to continue to use the settlement approach from a court decision 21 years ago. We have seen other settlement with the Blueberry River First Nations. We've seen consensus agreements for Treaty 8 nations as well. We've seen the recent treaty entitlement announcement with the federal and provincial governments relating to land and compensation for lost economic opportunity as well.

These are issues for nations in our province that date back decades and decades. I think it's very important we take the time in this House so we all understand the reasons for how we got here and how we're going forward, the progress that's being made, because it's very important to keep that in context.

With this recognition agreement in legislation, we have an understanding that the Council of the Haida Nation, on behalf of the Haida Nation, will be able to enter into agreements and contracts, commercial and other financial arrangements, the ability to acquire, hold and dispose of property and assets, and to bring or defend actions before courts. This is the kind of recognition that you expect a nation to be having.

[11:25 a.m.]

I know that as we look at the fiscal relationship with nations in our province and the important work that needs to take place, as we look at the tax authorities, as we look at other ways for which we can provide the right level of economic partnership with nations to enable them to have the resources, to have the programs to take care of their children, for example — take responsibility for their children back — under Bill 38, as we debated at length last session....

We all want to ensure that, just like with the Haida Nation, this type of recognition legislation is extended to other nations in our province so we can further the progress in our continued work around economic reconciliation and other forms of reconciliation with First Nations and Indigenous nations in our province.

With that, I look forward to reviewing those matters with the minister at committee stage.

A. Olsen: I appreciate this opportunity to speak to Bill 18, the Haida Nation Recognition Act. I first want to just acknowledge.... The minister noted Guujaaw. I think also, in recognition of the many leaders from the Haida Nation who have advanced the relationship with the provincial government to where it is today, and we're standing here talking to Bill 18.... Certainly, I think that Guujaaw is the most well known of those leaders.

It has taken incredible leadership in our communities, First Nations communities and Indigenous communities across the province, a level of patience and persistence that is unmatched in order to achieve.... As the official oppo-

sition critic and the minister have talked about, the legal advances to get us to where we're at today have taken no end of effort on behalf of Indigenous leaders.

I often say that Indigenous leaders in this province — in British Columbia and, indeed, across the country — are some of the most powerful leaders that we see in this place, and it's because they are often required to do so much with so little. As the official opposition critic just noted in talking about the fiscal reform that's much needed, the reality is that this chamber, the power that is in this place, controls almost everything about Indigenous lives. The power that is within the House of Commons controls, through different pieces of legislation, the pace and the flow at which decisions are being made.

Without that fiscal reconciliation, a companion to the Declaration Act, which enshrines the United Nations declaration on the rights of Indigenous people.... These are twin, companion initiatives that need to be taken in concert with one another.

I know that we first advanced the legislation here in the province, the first province to do so in the country, even, the first governing body in the country to advance the Declaration Act and to enshrine the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act into law. It happened right here in British Columbia, and we did this unanimously.

I think, as I've said in other speeches with respect to First Nations inherent rights and title, that the passing of that law unanimously is really important. It's critical for First Nations. And it's important that when our Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation and the government speak to that, they continue to remind all members, and that when we speak to this, as members of the opposition, we continue to be reminded that we stood with government.

[11:30 a.m.]

Oftentimes the stories that are told about this place are of the division, of this two-swords'-lengths line that runs between this side of the House and that side of the House. But I think it's important for Indigenous leaders to know that when important laws are being made and important actions are being taken within this Legislature, every effort has been taken to build consensus.

As the Indigenous nations, Indigenous people have existed on the landscape and engaged in the land and the waters of this beautiful place since time immemorial, it matters little to them, or should matter little to them, who's on this side of the House and who's on that side of the House.

What matters is they know that when they're engaging this House, they're engaging a mature governing body that does its work well in here and that can deliver for them consistency so that then when we are working with the leaders, leaders such as Guujaaw and many others across the province, whether it be this year or two years from now, the government here is doing everything in its power

to ensure that the decisions that are coming out of it are embraced by members of the House, of the whole House, as much as we possibly can.

It's not to say that there aren't going to be differences of opinion. There absolutely will be differences of opinion. But that building of consensus is really important so then we can continue to celebrate the acts of reconciliation. The journey of reconciliation is one that we're taking collectively.

I think today as we hear these the comments that have been made, first by the minister and then by the official opposition critic, the questions that will be asked will be in an effort to advance the entire conversation. It's with that spirit that I appreciate it.

I appreciate the work that this minister has done to advance Indigenous reconciliation and relations. As I was given the benefit of a phone call to be notified that this bill was coming, I said these words to the minister privately, and I think that they need to be on the record.

As much as we push and prod and test each other in debate and discussion, which is a necessary part of building consensus and testing and making sure that we're sure about what we're doing, it's important to also balance that with the recognition that we are in a substantively different place today because this minister and the former minister continue to build on the efforts of the previous ministers to advance reconciliation.

It's a collective effort of the ministers responsible for the file in here, but it's also, as I framed it earlier, a testament to the incredible and powerful leadership of Indigenous leaders in the province. So I just raise my hands in gratitude and thank the minister for continuing this important work.

Bill 18 is a bill that declares the inherent rights of governance and self-determination of the Haida Nation and the Council of the Haida Nation as being the government of the Haida Nation. I think it was only a few years ago that we were kind of doing battle about whether or not we were ever going to mention inherent rights because those are very, very powerful words, especially when you put them together in a sentence.

The power of those words actually, themselves, starts to undermine and deteriorate the power that this place feels that it has exclusively, because it's no longer exclusive if there are others that have the inherent rights to be able to generate revenue off their lands and make decisions for their people, just as this bill is doing for the Haida.

It's also important to recognize, as my colleague in the official opposition mentioned, that as with every one of these agreements, all of the other nations in the province are looking to the progress that's been made and saying: how can they also engage in that?

So this legislation is going to be followed by agreements by the Council of the Haida Nation to address the Haida governance and jurisdiction, starting with protected areas and Haida title lands, free of third-party interests, as well

as the negotiation of fiscal arrangements, which has been noted as a very important part of this work.

[11:35 a.m.]

As has been noted, this has been a long journey for the Haida, starting 21 years ago. The negotiation and litigation, the dual process, continue together. With the Changing Tide framework for reconciliation, the Council of the Haida Nation has received good-faith measures, funding from both the federal and the provincial governments, which they are going to be using to do what Indigenous nations do when they get resources. That's invest in their community, invest in their governance and build their communities.

It's important to note the words from the Haida Nation that this recognition agreement, from their perspective, is not a treaty. The very clear statement that I think needs to be mentioned in the context of this is that it does not grant the Haida rights, because their rights are inherent. I think that's something that's important to acknowledge here. It simply recognizes that the Haida Nation's inherent rights to governance and self-determination exist and that we will be engaging with each other — this governing body and their governing body — from that perspective.

With that, I have the honour of reading some words from a member of my colleague from Cowichan Valley's constituency office, Gud Takin Jaad, Rose Williams, as she's known. Rose joined us last spring in the B.C. Green caucus as one of our legislative interns and has been working with the member for Cowichan for the last number of months.

I've always appreciated her perspective. I asked if she would be willing and prepared to have me say a few things from her perspective as someone who is Haida and how this makes Rose feel about where we're at today.

Here are those words from Gud Takin Jaad.

"The Haida phrase for reconciliation translates to 'people working together to make things right,' and this bill, the Haida Nation Recognition Act, is a vital step towards making things right.

"As Haida, we understand our deep connection to the lands and waters of Haida Gwaii. The archipelago has been the homeland to my nation since time immemorial.

"My relatives tell me stories of the last ice age. Our ancestors gathered atop the highest mountains where the ice didn't reach to discuss governance and the upcoming plans for the year. Potlatches were held to honour significant events and redistribute wealth and for the people to witness governance.

"Our ancient teachings tell us of the importance of *Yah'guudang*, respect for all living things.

"Despite our strong systems of governance, cultural practices and close relationships to the land, the colonial governments of so-called Canada stood to diminish us. The potlatch ban criminalized our culture and our systems of governance for nearly seven decades.

"Generations of Haidas were forbidden from gathering, feasting and practising our culture. Generations of Haida children were taken from their homes and forced to attend residential schools across the province. Despite the best efforts to diminish us, my nation remains strong, and our culture survived.

"When I was 12, I distinctly remember my sixth-grade teacher walking into the classroom brandishing a shiny new globe. We

took turns spinning the globe and placing our fingers on the tiny archipelago in the Pacific. Finally, Haida Gwaii. Our place name was finally accurately reflected on the globe.

"Although the name change alone didn't make up for the centuries of colonial violence, the cultural genocide experienced by my nation, it was the proof that the colonial governments of so-called Canada were willing to make things right.

[11:40 a.m.]

"We are reclaiming and revitalizing what makes us Haida. Not long ago our language, our culture, our connection to the land and our very existence were threatened. I feel so grateful to exist in this monumental time of resurgence.

"The changes that have taken place in recent decades are remarkable, and although there is a long way to go, the Haida Nation Recognition Act propels us forward.

"I honour my ancestors and my relatives, the Council of the Haida Nation, the elected governance of Skidegate and Old Massett and our Hereditary Chiefs and Matriarchs. So much good work has been done to get to this point.

"The Council of the Haida Nation is unique. It was not created under the purview of a colonial authority by way of the Indian Act but rather through the efforts of the community. The Council of the Haida Nation encapsulates the voices of elected officials, Hereditary Chiefs and Matriarchs, and their decision-making is guided by Haida laws and values.

"This bill recognizes what we have always known to be true. The Haida Nation has inherent rights of governance and self-determination. We have an inseparable connection to the land and waters of Haida Gwaii.

"As Haida people, we have a responsibility to honour this connection by governing our homelands through Haida law. This bill affirms our right to do so.

"By recognizing our inherent title and the rights as Haida people, the provincial government is taking the steps forward to making things right.

Haawa.

HÍSWKE SIÁM.

Deputy Speaker: Seeing no further speakers, does the minister wish to close debate?

Hon. M. Rankin: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I would like to briefly comment on the very thoughtful speeches by both the member for Vancouver-Langara and the member for Saanich North and the Islands. I just want to say a thank-you for their consistent support for initiatives involving reconciliation.

It's one of the things that makes me so proud to be a part of this wonderful province of British Columbia. It's clear for all to see — the level of mutual commitment we have in this place, this Legislature, where we represent the people of our province, that mutual support for the efforts that are finally being made. I find it very moving, and I'm grateful.

The supportive comments and the member from Langara's reference to the constitution being available and transparent, and the governance system, were very, very helpful.

I was very moved by the words of Rose Williams, speaking about *Yah'guudang*. Anyone who, like myself, has had the great pleasure of seeing all of Haida Gwaii, from Mas-

sett to the southern part of Moresby Island, and to experience Haida Gwaii.... Anyone who has been there will know how unique that part of our province is.

It's not surprising.... The member for Saanich North and the Islands acknowledged and saluted the leadership of the Council of the Haida Nation over the years. I, too, want to reference Guujaaw, who now goes by the name of Gidansda. I also want to reference Miles Richardson, who was also president of the Council of the Haida Nation, for his leadership. Both of those gentlemen have been friends of mine for over 40 years. Of course, now, Gaagwiis, Jason Alsop, continues that tradition of strong leadership as president of the Council of the Haida Nation.

I want to thank the members for their speeches. I, too, look forward to our committee debate.

With that, I move second reading.

Motion approved.

Hon. M. Rankin: I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House to be considered at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 18, Haida Nation Recognition Act, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. P. Alexis: I believe we are at the point where we're doing third reading on Bill 11, the Election Amendment Act.

Third Reading of Bills

BILL 11 — ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT, 2023

Bill 11, Election Amendment Act, 2023, read a third time and passed.

[11:45 a.m.]

Hon. P. Alexis: I'd like to call second reading on Bill 24, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act (No.2).

Second Reading of Bills

BILL 24 — MISCELLANEOUS STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT (No. 2), 2023

Hon. N. Sharma: I move that the bill now be read a second time.

The bill proposes to amend the listed acts, as follows.

Child, Family and Community Service Act. Young people from government care want to thrive, not just survive. This proposed legislation will amend the Child, Family and Community Service Act and build on our suite of sup-

ports and services for youth as they leave government care and transition to adulthood.

The proposed amendments will enable the ministry to support all young people from care, which sometimes it didn't previously have the legal authority to do, up to the age of 27; expand eligibility for new, comprehensive transition supports, making them more accessible to all young adults from care, regardless of legal care status; support young adults from care to maintain stable housing by making emergency pandemic housing supports permanent and providing a rent supplement program; provide an unconditional monthly income supplement, up to \$1,250 until the age of 20, to cover living expenses; and maintain that funding until the young adult's 27th birthday, if they participate in eligible programming.

[S. Chandra Herbert in the chair.]

The next one is the Societies Act. This change is a technical correction to the Societies Amendment Act, 2021. That act added a new regulation-making power to the Societies Act to create an ability for post-secondary student societies formed under the Societies Act to receive member lists from the post-secondary institutions. It was recently discovered that the regulation power inadvertently omitted student societies at Royal Roads University and Thompson Rivers University from its scope.

Human Tissue Gift Act. The Human Tissue Gift Act covers organ and tissue donation in British Columbia. Under the act, organs may be donated by a living donor for transplant into another living person or after a donor's death, which is described in the act as a post-mortem transplant. Organ donation is critically important to extend the lives of hundreds of British Columbians each year, and more than 50 percent of donations are postmortem donations from registered donors.

These amendments will improve patient-centred health care, reduce procedural barriers and support organ donations by allowing nurse practitioners, in addition to medical practitioners, to make a determination of a patient's death for the purpose of postmortem organ donation.

The proposed amendments would not broaden the nurse practitioner's scope of practice to include the determination of death using neurological criteria. The authority of a nurse practitioner to make a determination of death would be limited to circumstances in which the fact of the donor's death may be determined using circulatory criteria. Expanding the health care professionals that can declare death prior to postmortem organ transplant will increase the chances of successful recovery of viable organs, which could have significant benefit for British Columbians awaiting transplant.

The next is the Strata Property Act. Contrary to government's intent, some lawyers are advising strata corporations that the amendments to the Strata Property Act in Bill 44 last fall allow them to continue enforcing all pre-

vious age restriction bylaws. This amendment will clarify that not only can strata corporations not pass bylaws setting a minimum age that is less than 55, but they also cannot have or enforce such bylaws they have already passed. The amendment would be made retroactive to November 24, 2022, to hold harmless anyone inappropriately facing bylaw enforcement action since Bill 44's royal assent.

[11:50 a.m.]

Employment Standards Act. Early this year government passed legislation establishing the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation as a provincial statutory holiday, to be observed every September 30, starting in 2023. This is a significant step forward in B.C.'s reconciliation journey. Government heard from our Indigenous partners that public commemoration of that day is a vital part of furthering the reconciliation process.

It is important to support as many British Columbian workers as possible in publicly observing that day. As such, amendments to the Employment Standards Act are necessary to ensure entitlement to the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation statutory holiday applies to eligible unionized workers, regardless of the provisions in their collective agreement. This will help encourage all B.C. workers to participate in public commemoration events on that day.

Vancouver Charter. The proposed amendments to the Vancouver Charter have two key goals: to provide the city of Vancouver with a modernized general fee authority and to enhance Vancouver's authority to require reimbursement from defaulters, in property-related matters, for work done by the city. These amendments will respond to specific requests made by Vancouver to address some limitations of the existing fee and defaulter's expense in the Vancouver Charter.

Specifically, the amendments will enable Vancouver to establish or regulate fees for the use of municipal property or any service that it is authorized to provide under the Vancouver Charter through bylaw. The amendments will also provide Vancouver the broad authority to take remedial action and recover the costs at the expense of someone who defaults on a property-related requirement by the Vancouver Charter.

These amendments bring Vancouver into line with the authorities all other local governments have under the Community Charter.

Mr. Speaker, I think, noting the hour, I will reserve my place and move adjournment of the debate.

Hon. N. Sharma moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Committee of Supply (Section A), having reported progress, was granted leave to sit again.

Committee of Supply (Section C), having reported progress, was granted leave to sit again.

Hon. P. Alexis moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Members. We'll see you at 1 p.m.

The House adjourned at 11:53 a.m.

Proceedings in the Douglas Fir Room

Committee of Supply

ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE (continued)

The House in Committee of Supply (Section A);
F. Donnelly in the chair.

The committee met at 11:05 a.m.

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I call Committee of Supply, Section A, to order.

We are meeting today to continue consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure.

I now recognize the minister to move the vote.

On Vote 45: ministry operations, \$1,020,919,000
(continued).

T. Halford: I'm just going to hand it over to my colleague the MLA for Kelowna West.

I want to quickly say thank you to the staff. I know probably a number of staff have had to commute back and forth or spend time in Victoria. It's probably caused them to miss some family dinners or soccer games or other important time with family. I want to say thank you for taking that time today.

With that, I'm going to pass it over to the MLA for Kelowna West.

B. Stewart: I just want to follow up on some questions that were canvassed last year. I don't recall receiving an update.

This one in particular is Westside Road, between Highway 97 south and Highway 97C, I believe it is. There's a four-component repair job that was being done on that road over the last, about, 12 years. There's been significant investment by MOTI in terms of identifying where the most significant safety concerns are.

This was a project that was a priority for MOTI. They've finished the first three phases. Safety works, I understand, are being added this year, but there's one section that remains outstanding of the four parts, obviously the most difficult geotechnically, safety-wise, etc.

In last year's comments, the minister mentioned to me that they understand that the work is being done, and there's design work that's ongoing, funded this year and in the budget that's before us. "I will inform future funding needs so that we're able to cost the improvements."

I'd just like to have a status update on, assuming that the design work was completed, what the costs are estimated to be and when that's expected to be carried out.

[11:10 a.m.]

Hon. R. Fleming: Thank you to the member for the question. Good to see him again. The status update he seeks I'll answer in two parts. There is some safety work that is scheduled in the tightest sections that involves shoulder-widening, and that will begin this summer and completion will occur by the end of the calendar year.

In terms of engineering on a longer stretch, a larger-scale project is not yet complete. It's substantially complete but is not yet complete. There is some steep topography and other challenges to take into account that will inform the engineering and, ultimately, the costing, which will be in the tens of millions of dollars for sure.

We will provide a further update to the member, if he wishes, on that because there is still some professional engineering evaluations being done, and we will, of course, be continuing to consult with the Westbank First Nation and the Okanagan Indian Band, whose traditional territories this project would fall within.

B. Stewart: I appreciate, and I was aware from your staff, that there were safety improvements being taken on this particular stretch. There's been an awful lot of these kinds of not-yet-complete answers we've received over the last number of years. I say that meaning that I know that the design work, the geotechnical, is challenging. I know it's expensive. However, this road, perhaps, might not be.... BCAA named it, consecutively, B.C.'s worst road. There is significant provincial traffic that travels between Bear Creek Provincial Park as well as Fintry, making this section, which was on the local website as the listed improvements, a priority.

I drove this road about two weeks ago. Again, there are sections where what is a cabled barricade is actually hanging mid-span in the air. I know the issues, but it's not going to be resolved with just simple shoulder-widening.

To put it in perspective, if the minister could just tell me the amount of dollars that are committed to these safety improvements this year?

[11:15 a.m.]

Hon. R. Fleming: So \$3 million worth of safety work

on this stretch was completed in 2019. We've incurred expenses with external engineers of about \$500,000. Some of that work is informing the \$2 million that we plan to expense this year on the shoulder-widening that I described that will be in the area where the hanging barrier will be repositioned and the shoulder will be widened. There'll be some signage in terms of that safety package of improvements.

As I described earlier, we're going to continue to look at some of the challenging conditions that are geotechnical and topographical around a bigger project that would involve straightening curves and repositioning the roadway.

B. Stewart: When I first got elected in 2009, I met with the residents out there that were concerned about their school children travelling on the bus. Every day, there are six buses that leave Northwest Side with about 160 children on the buses going to different schools in school district 23, an hour and a half.

You and I discussed, when you were Minister of Education, trying to relocate or work on it with OKIB and the school up on the reserve so that they didn't have to travel this road. But today they're still travelling every day, twice a day, on that road.

It was a lidar survey that the ministry did that proved that this road was, in many places, too narrow. I just would like to.... I met with the residents as I was up there a couple of weeks ago. They can still raise this as their number one concern in terms of road safety, and there are continued deaths on this road. It's been a project where people do end up going off, and when they do go off, they often end up in Lake Okanagan.

[11:20 a.m.]

I'll make the offer that if you or staff want to take that drive.... I'm sure that the members behind you.... They probably know well what it's like. I'm sure it's not.... It's the traffic counts that are increasing. We put in pullouts. We did the safety improvements. But this section is definitely the part that is slowly slipping into the lake.

I just wanted to raise that you mentioned Westbank First Nation. I met with Chief Robert Louie, who's the chief of Westbank First Nation, talking about priorities for the band. In 2005, they executed an agreement with the ministry on the W. R. Bennett Bridge to make certain road improvements. That agreement called for an interchange at Boucherie Road and Horizon Drive. We've canvassed this before, and it was in design stage previously.

The question I still get from Chief Louie and the members of the Westbank First Nation is: when is that interchange going to be built, as well as the modifications at Hudson and Westlake Road, which is the second one? I know from recent briefings I've had that they're still on the radar screen. I'm just wondering: what timeline can I advise Chief Louie as to when these are likely to take place?

Hon. R. Fleming: Last year government approved and began spending approximately \$14.1 million on design for both interchanges, both Boucherie and Westlake.

The Boucherie design is currently at about 70 percent functional design. Westlake is at about 50 percent preliminary design. These are challenging and large studies that are underway. It has been identified, as well, in the Central Okanagan integrated transportation strategy as an area of key priority for a variety of reasons around growth and around connectivity and around the travel time of which transit could utilize the bridge and get downtown, and a whole bunch of things.

[11:25 a.m.]

It is also identified as an area of potential for transit-oriented development once those interchanges are of a better capacity and functionality.

We're also working with Westbank First Nation, who has land ownership interests in the area of the intersection as well. So we will, again, advise the member on the different stages that we will update, the functional design and preliminary designs of these two interchanges.

B. Stewart: To be clear, the ministry will advise myself so that I can advise Westbank First Nation as to the timelines as to these....

Interjection.

B. Stewart: Okay. Thank you.

The last question I have is about an incident that took place on Highway 97C, August 19 of 2022. There was a logging truck that caught fire on the connector going over towards Merritt from West Kelowna. I've got several emails here from people that were trapped for seven and a half hours on the road.

I think that the bigger concern is that there was no communication from maintenance or RCMP as to how much longer.... There was no alternative given to being able to turn around and leave. That road is divided by barriers. I'm not certain how you would initiate that.

I'd be interested to know what steps have been taken by MOTI in terms of being able to address these issues. Even though there are reader boards on the highway, it was open for at least one and a half hours after the fire started, and people were still driving up and trapped up there on this particular stretch of road.

Hon. R. Fleming: Thank you to the member for raising this issue. That unacceptable delay and situation resulted in having debriefs that had the RCMP and the contractor and our ministry in the same room, sitting down together, to develop clearer protocols of how they communicate with each other, which is immediately; assess the situation and take action, like breaking barriers so people can turn around more quickly, based on how long they think the delay will be; use existing technology to update, much

more quickly, reader boards; and just to respond much more quickly.

Problems that were found were that the RCMP and the contractor struggled to communicate with each other in a timely manner and make decisions together that would have kept a lot of people from the extreme discomfort and frustration of being stuck for up to seven hours in a situation like that.

[11:30 a.m.]

T. Halford: I want to thank my colleague the member for Kelowna West for championing those issues for his constituents.

I'm going to move on to the Passenger Transportation Board and be fairly succinct in my questions here. Can the minister tell us why we've seen a fairly substantial slash in the PTB board budget by 44 percent from \$890,000 to, now, just over \$500,000?

Hon. R. Fleming: I know that the member is trying to use his remaining time to cover some different topics, so I'm going to get some more precise numbers to him about the actual increase to the PTB budget. What has basically happened is that there's a smaller voted appropriation but a higher fee recovery. So there's a net increase in the operational budget of the PTB.

[11:35 a.m.]

That's going to support additional hirings of new FTEs, which will be used to administer their enhanced area of responsibility as well as additional compliance activities. So while the voted appropriation has gone from \$890,000 to approximately \$500,000, the fee-based recovery has increased, and the overall budget is larger.

In the interest of time, unless I get the numbers and can read them into the record later, I will leave the answer there for now and, outside of the estimates process, if that's required, give further details to the member.

T. Halford: Thank you to the minister for that. I guess, following that, it looks like the passenger transportation branch is also substantially down. I would assume that's the same deal. Does the minister not have...? When he's talking about the fines recovered, are those numbers that currently exist, or are those forecasted?

[11:40 a.m.]

Hon. R. Fleming: Similar to the last question, there's a net contribution by Budget 2023 that doesn't tell the full story that's behind there. Thanks to the passing of some legislation we did last year, there are additional fees available in the passenger transportation industry that are paying for new accessibility grant programs and also the oversight and administration of the ground transportation sector. So a growing budget to match the growing area of responsibility. We'll commit to get some numbers there.

I think we did have some debate about why we were

doing that when we introduced the legislation. It was to address a number of problems I think the official opposition and the government acknowledged existed previously but were really exacerbated during the pandemic, when the ridership in the taxi industry collapsed and the higher overhead costs of accessibility taxis became a barrier that was leading to some of those taxis being removed from being in service in different communities.

Grant programs are a new feature. Higher recoveries are because of a higher fee and also paying for more of the branch's activities in a cost recovery manner to reflect that this commercial, for-profit industry needs to cover a lot more of the costs that government provides for its oversight.

T. Halford: Thank you to the minister for that. We've seen an application put forward by Uber, submitted in September of 2020, specifically a licence transfer from ReRyde Technologies. It's been quite a while. We don't know if a decision has been made, because one hasn't been publicly communicated yet.

When we see that substantial drop in budgetary commitments, you do tend to make a connection between the fact that this has taken a long time in my colleague's riding, in the capital city, to get a decision on this application.

So I'm wondering if the minister can provide a status update, if he can say if there's a linkage there between the budget reductions and the application as well.

Hon. R. Fleming: Just to clarify, there's no drop in either the budget of the Passenger Transportation Board or the passenger transportation branch. In fact, there's a dramatic increase. As I said earlier, there is a smaller voted appropriation and a larger fee recovery, so the total amount of money is higher.

[11:45 a.m.]

On the application for the licence transfer, I'm not in a position to answer that because the Passenger Transportation Board, as the member knows, is an independent board that makes their decisions free of interference from government.

If I have any information that is freely shared by the Passenger Transportation Board that would help address the member's inquiry, I would certainly share it with him. But I'm not in a position to provide that, nor would it be appropriate for me to speak for an independent board authority on their area of responsibility.

I move that the committee rise and report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 11:46 a.m.

Proceedings in the Birch Room

Committee of Supply

ESTIMATES: MINISTRY OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTIONS (continued)

The House in Committee of Supply (Section C);
J. Routledge in the chair.

The committee met at 11:05 a.m.

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I call the Committee of Supply, Section C, to order.

We are meeting today to continue consideration of the estimates of the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

I now recognize the minister to move the vote.

On Vote 39: ministry operations, \$26,715,000
(continued).

E. Sturko: Good morning to everybody. I want to start off just by clarifying that the questions related to the Michael Smith Foundation were not meant to criticize, of course, the work of that foundation but to ask the government, and specifically this minister, what measures, what safeguards, what policies are in place to ensure there is no potential that anyone who will profit from publicly supplied addictive drugs that these individuals.... That there is no influence or conflict of interest in the province's response to our addictions crisis....

What is beyond the pale is that the minister can't demonstrate how they're protecting the province from potential conflicts of interest like those who want to profit off our crisis. To the minister, do the organizations and agencies which provide or have provided policy development, research, monitoring and evaluation, advice or service to the ministry receive grant money or funding directly or indirectly, through hospital foundations, from any pharmaceutical companies, and if so, how is that potential conflict of interest evaluated by this government?

[11:10 a.m.]

Hon. J. Whiteside: Good morning, everyone. With respect to the line of questioning from yesterday and the Michael Smith Foundation and the work that they do, the member had raised particular concerns about a particular company and particular individuals related to that company.

I want to be clear on the record that Fair Price Pharma, the company that the member referenced yesterday, is in fact a not-for-profit organization. Nobody stands to profit from any of the work associated with the extraordinary

efforts of individuals like Martin Schechter, who is a professor at UBC, a doctor. He has extraordinary expertise in clinical epidemiology and health services, starting in the HIV/AIDS area, and urban health research. He has developed work now with respect to the opioid crisis and is an important contributor to a public health response to this unrelenting toxic drug crisis. In addition, his partner in that endeavour is Dr Perry Kendall, former chief medical health officer.

Given the nature of the public health concerns that those individuals bring to the debate, I think it's important to understand, in that sense, the role and purpose of a research organization like the Michael Smith Foundation and the work that is done.

With respect to the very broad question that the member asked around a number of different areas, I would encourage the member to ask Health with respect to questions about procurement of pharmaceuticals. That is dealt with by the pharmaceutical division of the Ministry of Health. Likewise, hospital foundations are under the Ministry of Health.

I would just say that broadly speaking, in terms of the kinds of guardrails and provisions that we have in place throughout the public service, throughout the work of government, there is language in contracts, there are evaluations. Groups that do evaluate programs are done by RFP processes that have very high standards of conflict of interest and ethics attached to them.

If there's a specific area the member would like to focus in on, we can perhaps get some particular staff support to answer those particular questions. But generally speaking, just broadly, when it comes to contract provisions, evaluations, those measures are undertaken according to very established kinds of policies and procedures within government.

E. Sturko: Again, just to reiterate, my line of questioning is not to call into question the hard work of individuals who have worked both for this province and for non-profits and for other organizations. My questions were to have this minister demonstrate how the public is protected from individuals who may be profiting, who set up companies that are designed to dispense PSAD, publicly supplied addictive drugs.

I think in the second part of the question, she partially answered that. It's not only related to procurement but also related to how different companies and individuals are influencing the way that this province is going, policy directions that this place will be taking.

In light of some of the comments I made yesterday, after receiving some information that was incorrect — a mistake perhaps made by the minister, initially — about what type of research was being done for this government by the Michael Smith Foundation, I think some of these issues are actually quite legitimate. We have to be cautious to ensure that those that are providing this government with

policy advice, with research, are not those whose potential influence, as a result of successes they may find, profiting or at least advancing their own beliefs upon things that are being done with this opioid crisis....

[11:15 a.m.]

I'm going to move on. Yesterday I asked the minister about the select standing committee report issued 158 days ago. The government had stated, in the transition binder, that it needs to analyze the recommendations and consider options for decisions. The minister said that they would not be taking any further actions to release any analysis.

Will the government be releasing their analysis or any official response to the report by the select standing committee, and will this include public information on how the government is choosing to proceed on publicly supplied addictive drugs?

Hon. J. Whiteside: As I answered already, yesterday, with respect to the ministry's internal analysis of the report from the select standing committee.... Many of those recommendations already align with work that is being undertaken by the ministry, across our health care system, with our partners.

In terms of the sense of urgency around that.... I think that's why we see a \$1 billion investment in mental health and addictions in this budget. It's to respond to what really is a point of consensus amongst everyone about the need to work right across the continuum in terms of scaling up our harm reduction efforts, increasing access to prescribed safer supply, working on harm reduction measures.

I'm hearing from municipalities about the need for more overdose prevention sites. We know we need to do more on drug checking. We are opening hundreds of treatment beds. We are working with community partners with respect to the treatment and recovery space and with our health care system to develop seamless models of care to eliminate gaps. I mean, all of that work is undertaken and is very consistent with the recommendations from the committee.

That work is ongoing. That work is reflected in the mandate and the service plan. I think you'll find everywhere that the important discussion the select standing committee had with respect to this crisis is reflected in the work that we are doing.

When it comes to prescribed safer supply.... That work is undertaken on the advice of and under the guidance of clinical experts working in our health care system and in our public health wing of our health care system.

E. Sturko: Will the government release a response to the report?

Hon. J. Whiteside: The report is reflected in all of the work that the ministry is doing.

[11:20 a.m.]

E. Sturko: If the government would release a report, then people would know.... As the minister said, not all the recommendations are being followed. It would be, probably, helpful for the public to understand which of those recommendations are being followed, which are not and what the reasons behind that are.

Will this ministry be releasing a response to that report?

Hon. J. Whiteside: When we look at the process of the select standing committee and the response from the community to that process — the number of individuals who came forward with their stories, the number of organizations both external to government and across our health system, our community partners who provided input — it was such an extensive opportunity to really review what we have been doing and to highlight those areas where we know we have gaps.

The degree of consensus around the work we have undertaken is evident in the plan and work that we are undertaking in the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and across our health care system, in terms of the prevention and education work, in terms of the harm reduction work, on safer supply, on treatment and recovery, in terms of our enforcement and decriminalization work, working with youth, working with Indigenous people.

On every single category raised, on every single theme raised in this report, you will find work being undertaken across our health care system. So that work is being done. Much of what we are doing was canvassed and reinforced in recommendations by the report, and that's the work we're going to continue to do.

E. Sturko: It was just a simple yes-or-no question. I think I'd like it to be noted for the record that it's clearly no, that this government will not be releasing a report that would clearly outline which of the recommendations from the Select Standing Committee on Health will be taken into policy, into action, and those which the government will choose to ignore, despite the great work being done by that committee.

But I'm going to move on again. This time, we're going to go back and talk about compassion clubs, please. Compassion clubs, non-prescriber co-ops and non-prescriber PSAD — are they part of the next phase of this government's plan for giving out publicly supplied addictive drugs?

Hon. J. Whiteside: With respect to our government's work on prescribed safer supply, which flows from recommendations from public health, it's undertaken, of course, under a very, very close set of clinical guidelines.

The select standing committee report laid out a number of recommendations with respect to our work on prescribed safer supply, including working with regulatory colleges and professional associations of physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, pharmacists in B.C. to identify

and resolve barriers to prescribing and providing a prescribed safer supply of substances, to increasing education, ensuring that clear clinical guidance is in place, addressing barriers such as transportation for individuals in rural and remote communities.

[11:25 a.m.]

With respect to that recommendation, that work is underway. We're engaged with regulatory bodies and our health care system around how to increase the number of prescribers and to better support them in this work. That is the focus of the government's efforts. It is in respect to prescribed safer supply, as outlined in the select standing committee report.

E. Sturko: We have in the transition binder this information about the pilot application for the heroin co-op model by the BCCSU. It is looking to develop a plan here in British Columbia for non-prescriber co-ops, non-prescribed publicly supplied addictive drugs.

I understand the work that's being done in regard to prescribed publicly supplied addictive drugs. I'm asking specifically, and I would ask that the minister directly answer, whether or not non-prescribed publicly supplied addictive drugs are part of this government's plan for the next phase of their harm reduction strategy.

Hon. J. Whiteside: I can tell the member that the work that we are doing is as recommended by public health and by the select standing committee on prescribed safer supply. We have no projects funded that point to a non-prescriber model.

E. Sturko: When this project was, then, brought forward by the BCCSU.... If this is not part of where the province wants to go, if you say they are not going towards a non-prescribed.... That means you don't need a doctor. You can just go and get publicly supplied addictive drugs like heroin, potentially cocaine.

If that is not part of where this province is going to go, why not quash...? Why not tell BCCSU: "Don't waste your time and energy on this proposal"? Why would you have accepted a draft proposal, a preliminary draft of this application, if it is not part of where this government is going?

Can you please state on the record that it is definitely not where this government is going, if that's your intention?

Hon. J. Whiteside: With all due respect.... In the context of the crisis that we are in right now, we have front-line providers and researchers and people in communities working desperately to find solutions.

Research organizations, which operate with degrees of academic freedom, completely unrelated to work that government does, come up with lots of ideas about what they

think should be done. That does not drive government's program with respect to this area.

This is a very broad space that we are operating in. There are very many views about how to respond to the situation, including from the former public health officer, Dr. Perry Kendall, who was the public health officer for most of the 2000s and up until 2018. We, I think, owe some respect to those individuals who are working so hard, in the context of an unrelenting and unprecedented public health emergency, to find solutions.

This government is very focused on prescribed safer supply. That is what I have said numerous times. We have not funded any projects. We did not request projects from any research agency with respect to non-prescriber models, but those models are certainly under discussion out in community.

The government's approach is rooted in prescribed safer supply, as outlined in the recommendations that the select standing committee has forwarded, as outlined in the work we are doing with groups like the BCCSU and others to try to develop programs that separate people from the toxic drug supply.

E. Sturko: With all due respect, will the minister state, for the record, that this government is not moving to a non-prescriber...? There is no plan. The government will not be moving to a non-prescriber model of publicly supplied addictive drugs in British Columbia.

Hon. J. Whiteside: That has been asked and answered.
[11:30 a.m.]

E. Sturko: It's my opinion that the question actually has not been answered. This government has refused to go on the record and state that it will not be moving, in its next phase, to publicly supplied addictive drugs that are in the non-prescriber.... I know there's frustration in me saying that, but without a clear statement that that is not part of the next phase, I'm left with no choice but to believe that it is.

I'm going to move on. I apologize if these questions are frustrating, but it is a very serious issue. It is something that was brought up in the Select Standing Committee on Health.

I know that there's a lot of passion on all sides and that there is great work being done. It is not my intention to take away from research and individuals who have directions that they hope that this province will go in. I also have an obligation to ensure that the things that are being done are in the best interests of British Columbians, with safety in mind. That is where I go in asking our minister these questions.

I'm going to move on to youth overdoses and other harms. We know that in the last two years, 65 children and youth have lost their lives to the illicit toxicity crisis.

Can the minister share what information the government has collected on overdose events amongst children and youth under 18? Specifically, for each of the three past years, how many overdoses have paramedics attended or have been otherwise attended to in an emergency room? And how many of those overdose events have led to complications like an anoxic or hypoxic brain injury?

[11:35 a.m.]

Hon. J. Whiteside: With respect to the response of emergency health services, I'd defer that to Health, which is responsible for the emergency health services division.

With respect to outcomes for, I mean, all individuals, particularly children and youth, who experience a brain injury due to an overdose, that is research work that's currently being undertaken as a Ministry of Health project, along with partners and researchers, to determine the impacts of and metrics for improving epidemiology metrics and identifying ways to better screen, diagnose, treat and determine the needs for long-term support for those living with hypoxic brain injury, anoxic brain injury.

E. Sturko: What about other harms? Is the ministry collecting data on those other impacts on children and youth related to drug use?

[11:40 a.m.]

Hon. J. Whiteside: With respect to the impacts of substance use on children and youth, there are a number of ways we are seeking to pull together information and data from providers in order to help us better understand the impact of the crisis on youth.

The BCCDC is monitoring our health systems data for new incidents of overdose so we can scale up interventions we have through our increased Foundry network, through integrated children and youth teams and through the work health authorities are doing — for example, through the Downtown Eastside youth outreach team — trying to put in place those services that will help to reach out to youth to be able to better connect them to supports and services upstream, before problems become compounded.

I move that the committee rise and report progress and ask leave to sit again.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 11:44 a.m.

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