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3RD SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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Afternoon Sitting

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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2002

The House met at 2:03 p.m.

Introductions by Members

Hon. G. Halsey-Brandt: Joining us in the gallery this afternoon is Consul General Ian Kydd. Ian has been the consul general of the United Kingdom at Vancouver since March of 1998. He's also served this past year as dean of the large and dynamic Consular Corps of British Columbia. Under his leadership, the profile and the impact of the corps continue to grow. Ian's time with us was capped off in grand fashion with the visit of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to British Columbia on the weekend.

Consul General Kydd is in Victoria to say goodbye, as he will soon be travelling to his next posting in New Delhi. However, I know Ian and his family are avid skiers, and he assures me that they'll be back very soon to enjoy Whistler's world-class skiing. Will the House please join me in wishing Ian and his wife, Louise, all the best in their new posting.

[1405]

Hon. C. Clark: I am delighted today to introduce two friends who are in the gallery: Ken Lee, whom I've known since I was about 13 years old — that's a friendship of about 16 years, I guess — and his wife, Sharon, from Nanoose Bay. I hope the House will please make them welcome.

B. Belsey: I have the pleasure of introducing a couple of constituents and now friends that live in the Bella Coola Valley, Kathy Nysten and Brian Roe, who have joined us today. We've had a number of meetings. I would like the House, if they would, to join me in making them welcome.

Hon. S. Bond: I am delighted to have with us today a group of students who were working with me over the lunch-hour as we were beginning to discuss and plan the on-line strategy for British Columbia. I'm very pleased today to have students in the House with us, and I am pleased to say that my colleagues in the Surrey caucus would be happy to welcome them, as well, because they come from the SFU Surrey campus.

I am pleased to introduce Ian Buckley, who is in his final year of pursuing his bachelor of science degree in interactive arts; Marie-Claude Lavoie, in her third year of interactive arts at the SFU Surrey campus; Erika Glover, a fourth-year student; and Robin Johnson, a second-year student. Accompanying them today is Joanne Curry, the director of Simon Fraser University's Surrey campus, and — no stranger to the House — Wilf Hurd, who is the director of government relations for SFU. They did a great job presenting to me today. I'm excited about working with them. Please join me in making them welcome today.

Hon. B. Barisoff: Today it's a great pleasure to introduce Alberta's Revenue minister, the Hon. Greg Melchin, who has flown here from snowy Alberta. With him as staff today is the deputy minister, Robert Bhatia, and the executive assistant Glenn Shepherd. Could the House give them a warm, B.C. welcome.

R. Nijjar: It's my pleasure to introduce three guests of mine here today — three young British Columbians from the University of Victoria: Edrina Kumar, a UVic political science student; Ms. Parvinder Sahota, a graduate of political science from the University of Victoria who plans to go into law school; and last but not least, my cousin Nick Nijjar, also a student at the University of Victoria doing psychology. It especially brings me pleasure to introduce my cousin, because it's one of the few times I can be sure that my last name is pronounced properly in the House. That's very nice. Would everybody in the House please make the guests welcome.

Hon. C. Hansen: Earlier today government members and one opposition member joined the B.C. Pharmacy Association for a very interesting and informative luncheon. Some of the members of the B.C. Pharmacy Association and others who were at that lunch are in the gallery today: Linda Gutenberg, president of the B.C. Pharmacy Association; Geoff Squires, past president; Bob Kucheran, who is the CEO; Ian Maxwell, the CEO of Peoples Drug Mart; Wendy Mays, the director of pharmacy at Shoppers Drug Mart; and Brenda Osmond, who is the deputy registrar at the College of Pharmacists of B.C. Would the House please make them welcome.

M. Hunter: It's my pleasure to introduce two people who have dragged themselves away from the centre of Vancouver Island — Nanaimo — to join us today. Would the House please welcome Frank and Ann Graves.

I. Chong: Visiting us today is another grade 11 class from another excellent school in the riding I represent, and they are from Lambrick Park Secondary School. These 22 students are honour students, and they are accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Stu Barber, and another adult, Mrs. Barbara Bhalla. Would the House please make them all very welcome.

[1410]

K. Krueger: I'd like to introduce the member for Powell River-Sunshine Coast. [Laughter.]

H. Long: Thank you for the recognition in this House. I really appreciate it.

Today from Powell River I have some really good people here with me, some of my main supporters, people that have been with me right through my campaign and who, in fact, were instrumental in getting me nominated for this job. I don't know whether I'm going to compliment them or not for that. I'd like to

introduce to the House a good friend, David Formosa, his son Trevor, his son Ryan and Ray Formosa, who is a brother here in Victoria. I also have Victor and Lucy Formosa, the mom and dad of David here, and we welcome them. As well, we have Mary and Charlie Spiteri, visiting us from Australia, here in the House. I'd really appreciate it if you'd make them welcome.

Mr. Speaker: Been taking lessons from the Minister of Labour, I see.

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT (No. 2), 2002

Hon. Graham Bruce presented a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: a bill intituled Workers Compensation Amendment Act (No. 2), 2002.

Hon. G. Bruce: I move that Bill 63 be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Bruce: I'm pleased to introduce the Workers Compensation Amendment Act (No. 2), 2002. You don't know how pleased I am to be presenting that today.

This legislation replaces Bill 56, Workers Compensation Amendment Act (No. 2), 2002, which was introduced May 30, 2002. As a response from worker advocates and the employer community has resulted in several changes to that bill, I have brought this second revised bill to the House. This bill amends the Workers Compensation Act to reform the system's appeal processes and structures. The amendments illustrate our commitments to making the workers compensation system more responsive to workers and employers alike.

The bill will reduce the levels of review and appeal of Workers Compensation Board decisions from three to two. Limits will be set on the length of time an injured worker must wait for a final decision. This change will ensure a final decision is given within 15 months, about half the average time it takes to move through the current system.

The bill will establish an internal review function at the board to provide timelier reviews of initial decisions. It will also establish a new appeal tribunal independent of the Workers Compensation Board. This tribunal serves as the final level of appeal for workers and employers on the majority of workers compensation matters. It will make WCB policy, as set by the board of directors, binding on the workers compensation system.

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 63 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)

TOURISM IN THE KOOTENAYS

W. McMahon: I rise today to speak about something very near and dear to my heart, about an industry that has absolutely no limits to how large it can grow, how far it can go and how many businesses and job opportunities it can create in the best region of our beautiful province and particularly in my constituency. [1415]

The region I speak of is the Kootenays. The constituency I represent is Columbia River-Revelstoke. The industry I'm referring to is tourism.

Every year there is a growing volume of traffic entering this province from Alberta and the eastern provinces. People come to British Columbia not only from the Prairies but from the Pacific Northwest and beyond to experience the B.C. Rockies and the Kootenays as a whole. They come to hunt, fish and hike. They come to golf and mountain bike. They come with skis over their shoulders to explore the back country and challenge the fresh powder at our many mountain resorts.

There are a number of resorts in my riding that are expanding considerably, but it is not just the resorts. It is tourism generally that is growing. The industry is investing countless dollars in tourism for no other reason than they believe in British Columbia. They believe in the business climate we have created in this province, and they believe they will receive a return on their investments.

This region is undiscovered by many simply because it is not easy to access. We must open the Kootenays to the world and make it easy for tourists to come to Kimberley, Golden, Invermere and Revelstoke. We need to upgrade the Trans-Canada Highway and make it safer for all travellers. We need to improve our airport accessibility by expanding the Cranbrook Airport so that we can attract many charters. We are working hard on both these projects, and we will succeed.

We also need to work together to spread the word about our tourism opportunities. We need people from the East and West Kootenays to get together and take a Team Kootenay approach to attract more investors and more tourism from other regions. British Columbia has all the tools to be a North American leader in the tourism industry, and it is because of the hard work, the dedication and the belief of people in the Kootenays that we will be number one.

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to invite everyone to come and experience my part of the world. Come to the Kootenays and experience the very best that we can offer.

MLA AND STAFF WEIGHT-LOSS CONTEST

B. Kerr: It's my pleasure today to rise and give the results of a matter that's been weighing heavily on a number of our members over the past three months — a bad pun — and that, of course, is the contest we

started last July to see if we could not only get ourselves in better shape but also lose some weight. As you know, we're trying to get our fiscal house in order in the province, and I thought maybe we should also get ourselves in physically better shape. Studies have shown that people who are in better condition rely less on the health care system. They have more energy. They have a better sense of well-being and are more alert.

I'm really pleased to say that this challenge was taken up by most of the members and a number of the staff, and it was a tremendous success. People were coming up to me through the summer, even though it's barbecue season, and were telling me how much better they felt.

Well, the weigh-in was today, and hundreds of pounds were lost collectively. There was an average of about ten pounds to 11 pounds a member. To throw out a good statistic, we are 5.63 percent leaner than we were last July.

An Hon. Member: So are our paycheques. [Laughter.]

B. Kerr: Possibly we should have taken our wallets out of our pockets before we got weighed.

I would like to say that although there is going to be only one prize-winner, one person with the bragging rights, everybody's a winner in this situation because they all feel better. It's a matter of changing of lifestyles. Just from the results and things that people are telling me, we all feel better.

I have now kept you in suspense long enough. The envelope is here, and the winner of this contest is our member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows.

Mr. Speaker, if I could just say one more thing. The staff also got involved, and Heather James from Sustainable Resource Management won from the staff end.

EDUCATION FACILITIES IN BURNS LAKE AREA

D. MacKay: I'd like to start off by using a quote that is quite frequently used by the member for Peace River North: "More good news." During the election we committed as a government to protect the funding for health care and education. Have we lived up to those commitments? Not only have we protected the funding to the health care system; we have increased funding by \$1.1 billion.

An Hon. Member: Billion.

D. MacKay: Billion dollars. Thank you. And yes, we have protected the funding to education in spite of the declining enrolments. It is about the funding to education that I wish to address this chamber.

[1420]

On Thursday, October 3, I attended the grand opening of Decker Lake Elementary School, which is a small community school located just west of Burns

Lake. This small rural school has a student population of about 150 students. The event was well attended by school board officials, parents, grandparents, current and past teachers. The school was a treat to view, and all the students who attended were proud of the new school.

One of the young students in his address to the crowd mentioned that he was in his final year at this new school, and what was really exciting to him was that when he left this new elementary school, he would be going to another new school. This other new school of which the student speaks is called the Lakes District high school. I am proud to tell this House that this new high school is being built as I speak so as to address the needs of the students as they progress through the school system.

Those are but two new schools being built in the Burns Lake area, but I'm not finished yet. In addition to the new schools, we are also doing renovations to the College of New Caledonia, which will enhance post-secondary education in Burns Lake. So when someone claims we are not living up to our promises made during the election, I ask you to refer them to Burns Lake and see what we are doing there. We are doing what we said we would do, and that was to protect funding to education to ensure our students receive the best education possible. Our students and educators deserve nothing less.

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Oral Questions

DRUG COSTS

J. MacPhail: All across the province seniors are bracing themselves for January 1, when the Liberals start kicking seniors off Pharmacare. Yesterday the Minister of Health admitted that he had considered putting generic drugs out to open bidding, like Saskatchewan, but he decided to implement income testing instead. Did the Minister of Health ever consider that option before deciding to kick seniors off Pharmacare?

Hon. C. Hansen: I would suggest to the member that she perhaps listen a little more closely to the answers in question period. What I said yesterday was that we are in the process now of actively considering a tendering process for generic drugs. We're considering a whole range of initiatives to make sure that our Pharmacare system is, in fact, sustainable for the future. When you have costs rising at 14 percent to 18 percent a year, that is not a sustainable system. So we are taking the initiatives to make sure that the Pharmacare system will be there for seniors throughout the province this year, next year and ten years from now. Anybody that tries to argue otherwise is spreading myths and rumours and spreading fear among seniors, which is a great disservice to the seniors of this population.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has a supplementary question.

J. MacPhail: There are many things that this government has been trying to consider in terms of options available, but they decided first to kick seniors off Pharmacare before considering any other option.

I wonder whether the minister has considered applying the open bidding process to the brand-name drugs that are available. For instance, if you could actually apply the open bidding process to brand-name drugs, one could save \$20 million in, for instance, anti-depressant drugs. One could save another \$12 million in applying it to another category of drugs. Did the minister consider any of those options before kicking seniors off Pharmacare?

Hon. C. Hansen: No one will be kicked off Pharmacare — not a senior, not a child, not a mother, not one in this province. We have a Pharmacare system in this province that applies to every single British Columbian, and every single British Columbian will continue to be eligible for Pharmacare benefits. We will make sure that it's not just benefiting the rich more, as was the structure under their government, but it is structured to benefit everybody proportional to their ability to pay.

[1425]

When it comes to brand-name pharmaceuticals, the member knows very well that there is something in Canada, by federal government structure, called the patent drug review board, which ensures that we get much better pricing in Canada than really any other nation in the world but, in particular, compared to the pricing in the U.S.

Yes, I guess the short answer to the member is that we're looking at all of those options in terms of ensuring sustainability in our Pharmacare system.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has a further supplementary.

J. MacPhail: This government has sat on a secret panel report on options available to reduce the cost of Pharmacare — a range of options. It's a secret report that they refuse to release. Just in the last two days the opposition has presented available options to this minister now that could save \$60 million to \$70 million.

Will the minister table the government's secret Pharmacare option report today so that seniors can know what's available to them? Will the minister also reveal what meetings he has had with the industry in the last few months to talk about the future of Pharmacare? Did he reveal the secret panel report to the industry? Did he have his staff brief the industry on what's in that report? What did the industry advise him he should do as a result of them seeing the secret report?

Hon. S. Hawkins: There was a panel that was chaired by George Morfitt, who was the auditor of this province. There is a whole range of options — some of

them very detailed, complex kinds of options — that Pharmacare is looking at. We're considering all kinds of options.

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Hon. S. Hawkins: There was a host of participants that presented to the panel. In fact, if the opposition had wanted to present, there was an opportunity to do that. I don't recall that this member or the other member presented to the panel. If she had such good ideas...

Interjection.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Let us hear the answer from the minister, please.

Hon. S. Hawkins: ...in the last ten years, I wish she had brought them forward, because what we're trying to do is fix a Pharmacare program that they messed up. We're trying to make it fair, sustainable and one that's there for seniors not only today but into the future.

DEREGULATION IN RESOURCE INDUSTRIES

B. Belsey: My question today is to the Minister of State for Deregulation.

Over the past decade B.C. has lost thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in investment due to unnecessary regulations and red tape. In the *New Era* document, the government committed to reducing regulations and red tape by one-third over the next three years.

Can the Minister of State for Deregulation tell us what progress has been made to fulfil this commitment?

Hon. K. Falcon: That's correct. As you know, we made that commitment because we recognized that over the previous decade in particular, there had been an explosion of regulation and red tape in the province of British Columbia that crippled industries like mining and forestry. We also recognized that there was a cost associated with that, which was estimated to be in excess of \$5 billion annually.

We're working to try and bring about what we call "smart tape," where we can eliminate regulations that don't make any sense, so that we can improve the competitive environment in British Columbia. I am pleased to say that as of the end of our last quarterly report, we eliminated over 9,000 regulations so that we can focus on competitiveness, restore British Columbia prosperity and, most importantly, do it while protecting the important public values of public safety, health and the environment.

Mr. Speaker: The member for North Coast has a supplementary question.

B. Belsey: My supplementary question is to the Minister of Energy and Mines.

The oil and gas industry has the potential to play a significant role in communities along the north coast. However, excessive red tape and regulation has hurt the growth of this sector over the last ten years.

Can the Minister of Energy and Mines tell us what steps have been taken to reduce the burden of unnecessary regulations on the oil and gas sector?

[1430]

Hon. R. Neufeld: It's just more good news. It doesn't matter how you look at it; it's more good news. The Ministry of Energy and Mines has streamlined a lot of regulations to make it easier for the oil and gas industry to be able to invest in British Columbia while protecting the environment — very good things. In fact, the Ministry of Energy and Mines has reduced regulations, needless red tape, by over 1,100 pieces. That's 1,100 pieces of useless regulation gone.

When I was at home just recently in the great town of Fort St. John, in the Peace River country, there was an oil and gas conference. There were people there from all over North America in the oil and gas industry, and they commented constantly on how the reduction in red tape and taxes has made British Columbia an investment haven again. We're going to see the growth from that.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

J. Les: My question today is to the Minister of Education. Last week British Columbians were astounded to learn that nearly 29 percent of grade 10 students in British Columbia do not meet the reading skill levels that would normally be expected at their level. Now, bear in mind that these were grade 10 students, so this was a situation that took ten years to evolve. In light of that startling and unacceptable result, can the Minister of Education tell us today what she is doing to improve this unacceptable situation?

Hon. C. Clark: For the last 15 months our government has been focused squarely on improving student achievement, on making sure that we improve the quality of education that's delivered to children in British Columbia. Now, when we announced the foundation skills assessment results last week, we talked about some successes too. First, children are doing well in the areas of numeracy and writing. We've established an excellent trend in numeracy, but yes, there are some issues with respect to reading.

What we've done is appointed an achievement task force that will travel the province, define a common measure of achievement, think about how we can do better, look across the country and across the world for best practices and import those to British Columbia. We've signed accountability contracts, one with every district, where they benchmark their success, and we hold them accountable for that success every year. We've created school planning councils, one at every

school, where parents hold the majority. They will set goals for improvement based on their results year after year. We've launched the grad requirements review, which we'll be making decisions about early in the new year so that we can make sure the education we are delivering to children in British Columbia meets world-class standards and puts them on a footing to compete anywhere on this globe.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Chilliwack-Sumas has a supplementary question.

J. Les: The government has recently proposed, as well, that grade 10 courses be included in graduation requirements, making the graduation program three years instead of the previous two. Can the minister tell us how this change is intended to improve the quality of education for students?

Hon. C. Clark: Currently, our grad program is just grades 11 and 12. That means that in two short years, we're asking graduates to cram their entire program into a short period of time. We're proposing to expand that so that they have three years to start thinking about what it is they would like to do with their futures, get them focused a little bit earlier, get them planning a little bit earlier. Our economy in British Columbia is starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel — 88,000 new jobs created since December, over two million British Columbians working for the first time in the history of our province. We have an obligation as a government to make sure our education system is preparing every British Columbia student as well as we can to take full part in our economy.

LOBBYISTS REGISTRY AND DRUG COSTS

J. MacPhail: The *New Era* document — NED, as we like to refer to it — promised that this Liberal government would put in place a lobbyists registration act. The opposition asked for it eight months ago, six months ago, three months ago. We still don't have a lobbyists registration act. If it were in place today, as promised, seniors might know who has the minister's ear in the drug industry. The Minister of Health Planning wasn't forthcoming earlier when I asked the question, but maybe the Minister of Health Services agrees he shouldn't wait for his own government to dilly-dally and pass the Lobbyists Registration Act.

[1435]

Come clean. To the Minister of Health Services: who did he meet with from the pharmaceutical industry, and what advice did they give him when they saw the Pharmacare options report? Was it the drug industry's idea to kick seniors off Pharmacare?

Hon. C. Hansen: It is exactly that kind of fearmongering that is frightening seniors around this province.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Order. Let us hear the answer.

Hon. C. Hansen: I think the member is being totally irresponsible when she spreads that kind of fear among seniors in this province.

I have met with representatives of the drug manufacturing industry. I've met with the generic industry. I have met with the Pharmacy Association. I have not shown them any confidential information or any secret reports.

Interjection.

Hon. C. Hansen: I would like to tell the member that some of the most constructive ideas have come from the B.C. Pharmacy Association in terms of the submission they made to us last year with very constructive ideas in terms of how to make sure that our pharmaceutical program, our Pharmacare program, is sustainable into the future so it is there for seniors tomorrow, the year after and the next generation.

Speaking of the lobbyist act, I think it's really quite hypocritical for this member to criticize us for the time it takes to bring in a lobbyist registration act, when she had ten years to do it.

Mr. Speaker: The member for Victoria-Hillside has the floor.

PREVENTION OF FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME

S. Orr: My question is to the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development. September 9 was Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Day. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder can result in problems such as poor mental health, substance abuse and limited success in education and employment opportunities. Can the Minister of State for Early Childhood Development tell us what steps the government is taking to reduce the incidence of this disorder?

Hon. L. Reid: We have some amazing individuals on the ground across this province delivering a building blocks program. A building blocks program is all about mentoring for individuals who have children who have special needs. The mentoring aspect of that program will, indeed, reduce the number of babies born with FAS in our province, which is an incredibly complex disorder and one that requires, I believe, an incredibly compassionate response. We are doing that today.

In terms of reducing the incidence of fetal alcohol in the province of British Columbia, there are three times in the life of an individual when they should not drink — three times: when they're under-age, when they're driving and when they're pregnant. If that message were to be more readily available across this province, we collectively will have done our best

to reduce the number of babies born with fetal alcohol.

[End of question period.]

Motions on Notice

REAPPOINTMENT OF HEALTH COMMITTEE

Hon. G. Collins: I move Motion 42 in my name on the order paper to recharge the committee on health. [That the Select Standing Committee on Health be empowered to examine, inquire into and make recommendations with respect to responses to the Committee's Report to the House on December 10, 2001 entitled "Patients First" and those reports relating to health care and its delivery that have been published since the Committee reported to the House.

In addition to the powers previously conferred upon the Select Standing Committee on Health this present session, the Committee shall be empowered:

- (a) to appoint of their number, one or more subcommittees and to refer such subcommittees any of the matters referred to the Committee;
- (b) to sit during a period in which the House is adjourned and during any sitting of the House;
- (c) to adjourn from place to place as may be convenient;
- (d) to retain such personnel as required to assist the Committee;

and shall report to the House by December 13, 2002; to deposit the original of its reports with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly during a period of adjournment and upon resumption of the sittings of the House, the Chair shall present all reports to the Legislative Assembly.]

Mr. Speaker: Please proceed.

[Interruption.]

Mr. Speaker: We'll just pause for a moment. We'll pause for a moment while the galleries are cleared.

[1440]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

The House regrets the disturbance. It seems to have been removed.

The question in front of us is Motion 42, moved by the Government House Leader.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Collins: By leave, I move that the Select Standing Committee on Health be composed of Mmes. Roddick, convenor; Brice and Sahota; Messrs. Bray, Cobb, Harris, Hawes, Johnston, Long and Suffredine; and Ms. MacPhail.

Mr. Speaker, I expect that when that committee goes out and does what it's going to do, which is listen

to the people of British Columbia and discuss the various reports that are out there, the member from the opposition will have the opportunity for the first time in ten years, as well, to listen to what the people of British Columbia have to say about health care.

Leave granted.

Motion approved.

Reports from Committees

R. Hawes: Hon. Speaker, I have the honour to present a report of the Special Committee to Appoint a Chief Electoral Officer. I move that the report be taken as read and received.

Motion approved.

R. Hawes: I ask leave of the House to suspend the rules to permit the moving of a motion to adopt the report.

Leave granted.

R. Hawes: I move that the report be adopted.

Motion approved.

Motions without Notice

R. Hawes: I ask leave of the House to permit the moving of a motion to request the Lieutenant-Governor to appoint Mr. Harry Neufeld the chief electoral officer for the province of British Columbia.

Leave granted.

APPOINTMENT OF HARRY NEUFELD AS CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

R. Hawes: I move that this House recommend to Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor the appointment of Mr. Harry Neufeld as statutory officer of the Legislature to exercise the powers and duties assigned to the chief electoral officer for the province of British Columbia pursuant to the Elections Act.

[1445]

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce this House to Mr. Harry Neufeld. He's somewhere in the gallery today. He brings 20 years of experience in electoral management to the position of chief electoral officer. He's held several senior-level positions in three electoral management bodies: Elections B.C., the United Nations and Elections Canada. In addition, Mr. Neufeld worked as an electoral management consultant with the Canadian Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and with various international organizations and electoral agencies around the globe. All committee members are very confident that Harry will be able to contribute effectively to the ongoing tradition of excellence established by his predecessor, Mr. Robert Patterson.

The committee itself was tasked with selecting a new chief electoral officer. It is an all-party committee, and its recommendations have been unanimous. We received many applications from very qualified individuals and interviewed many who had excellent credentials. Mr. Neufeld, however, stood out above the rest, and it is him that we have recommended today.

I am informed by the Clerk's office that this has been the least costly selection committee process that they are aware of. That's primarily due to the excellent work done by staff and all of the committee members from both sides of the House. I'd like to offer my personal thanks to Craig James and his staff and to each of the committee members for a job well done.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Collins: I call second reading of Bill 62, the Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act (No. 3), 2002.

Second Reading of Bills

MISCELLANEOUS STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT (No. 3), 2002

Hon. G. Collins: I move that Bill 62 be now read a second time.

The British Columbia Railway Act is amended to remove from B.C. Rail and any of its subsidiaries the statutory obligation to provide passenger services on any of its rail lines. This is in accordance with their approved service plan, which went through the Legislature earlier this year.

The Employment and Assistance Act and the Employment and Assistance for Persons with Disabilities Act are amended to clarify that the minister has the authority to prescribe forms. The acts are also amended to deter people from quitting or refusing suitable employment without just cause or being fired with cause and then applying for assistance.

The transition amendment to the Employment Standards Act is a housekeeping measure to ensure that wage complaints filed before the new employment standards legislation took effect are treated under the old rules.

The amendments to the Escheat Act will reduce the number of orders-in-council required by the act and streamline the decision-making process by replacing the need for orders-in-council with ministerial orders.

The amendment to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act ensures that the substance of deliberations of cabinet and its committees is protected from release under the act as was originally intended. The clarification that committees of the executive council include committees that have some non-cabinet members is necessary to maintain the integrity of the cabinet committee system.

There are two amendments to the Highway Act. One amendment removes the statutory provision that only the Ministry of Transportation can fund arterial highway construction and maintenance. This is in ac-

cordance with the ministry's approved service plan as well.

The second amendment to the Highway Act and the consequential amendment to the Municipalities Enabling and Validating Act (No. 3) relieves the city of Vancouver from the statutory obligation to seek the approval of the Minister of Transportation for zoning bylaws affecting lands adjacent to controlled-access highways.

A housekeeping amendment is being made to the Interjurisdictional Support Orders Act to correct the reference in that act.

The amendment to the Ministry of Transportation and Highways Act is also housekeeping in nature and allows for the effective operation of provisions of the act dealing with contract arbitration.

The Motor Vehicle Act amendment establishes that a person who is issued an administrative driving prohibition for failing an alcohol breath test or refusing an alcohol breath test does not have the right to cross-examine any person during an oral review requested by that person.

The amendment to the Public Guardian and Trustee Act is twofold. Firstly, it is to relieve the public guardian and trustee from the requirement to arrange for periodic, independent evaluations of the effectiveness of the four adult guardianship acts. Significant portions of each of the four acts remain unproclaimed.

Prof. Albert McClean released his report in February 2002, which reviewed the effectiveness of the Representation Agreement Act. Further review would duplicate the costs and effort of work that's already completed.

[1450]

Secondly, it is to eliminate the Public Guardian and Trustee Advisory Board, as recommended by the core review and deregulation task force on September 17, 2002. Elimination of the board is consistent with government streamlining and deregulation.

The Special Appropriations Act is repealed. The act is no longer required, as the six program purposes ad-

ressed in the act are now funded through traditional budgeting and other legislative arrangements.

The amendment to the Vancouver Charter provides a specific property tax exemption for the British Columbia Cancer Agency branch at premises on West 10th Avenue in Vancouver, to the extent that the property is occupied by the British Columbia Cancer Agency branch and used for cancer research and charitable purposes. This legislation is supported by the city of Vancouver and fulfills a government commitment to the B.C. Cancer Foundation. The amendment will allow the B.C. Cancer Research Centre to use funds for research, not for property taxes.

I know that these items will be debated at length and voted upon, most likely, in committee stage. With that I move second reading.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Collins: I move this House do now adjourn. I'm sorry. I apologize. I gave the Clerk a heart attack.

I move that the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House for debate at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 62, Miscellaneous Statutes Amendment Act (No. 3), 2002, 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. G. Collins: I would have been the second person to do that, but probably for different reasons. I move that this House do now adjourn.

Hon. G. Collins moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

The House adjourned at 2:52 p.m.