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3RD SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2002

The House met at 10:02 a.m.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Prayers.

Private Members' Statements

GROWTH IN THE SKI INDUSTRY

T. Christensen: I'm going to speak this morning about an industry that's grown in importance in my constituency of Okanagan-Vernon over the past decade but is also an industry which has the potential to grow in many parts of this great province. It's an industry that many British Columbians start to think about a little bit more this time of year as temperatures fall below zero and we see the mountaintops and in fact, in many parts of the province, the valleys receive the first dusting of snow.

Here in balmy Victoria, it's a little more difficult to recognize that most of British Columbia is a winter playground. Whether it's alpine or Nordic skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, dogsledding, snowmobiling, back-country skiing, ice climbing or one of the many winter sports that have moved indoors like hockey, figure skating or curling, British Columbians in all parts of this province have world-class winter sports opportunities at their doorsteps. Many of us look forward to this time of year to participate in some of our favourite sports and activities.

Mr. Speaker, today I want to focus on the opportunities and the benefits offered by one of my own winter favourites, the ski industry in British Columbia, and the significant impact that industry has in my own constituency of Okanagan-Vernon.

The ski industry as a whole has enjoyed significant growth in many parts of British Columbia since the mid-1980s. The Canada West Ski Areas Association works on behalf of ski areas in Saskatchewan, Alberta, the Yukon and British Columbia, and was kind enough to provide me with some information about the growth of the ski industry in those jurisdictions. I was actually quite surprised to find out that Saskatchewan was considered a ski area, but nevertheless, the association represents them as well.

Nowhere has the growth in skiing been so impressive as in British Columbia. From total skier visits of about 2.4 million in 1985-86, ski areas in British Columbia hosted over 5.8 million skier visits in 1999-2000. The increase in skier visits becomes even more impressive if you look at where the skiers are coming from. Between the 1996-97 ski season and last year's ski season, the number of Canadian visitors to British Columbia ski areas increased by 2.6 percent, but the number of foreign visitors in that time period increased 163 percent.

[1005]

It may not come as a surprise to any of us who live in British Columbia that our province has always at-

tracted more foreign skier visits than any other part of Canada, but that percentage increase in the last five years is more than three times greater than the increase experienced by any other province. In fact, British Columbia resorts accounted for about 2.7 million of the four million foreign visitor skiers to Canada last year. To keep those skiers coming back, the Canada West Ski Areas Association estimates that British Columbia now has over a billion dollars invested in ski area infrastructure.

In the early 1980s the ski industry in British Columbia had only one true destination resort, that being Whistler. In addition to Whistler, there were about another 32 that were considered day skiing areas spread all around the province. Now, while Whistler and its neighbour, Blackcomb, have grown to become consistently ranked among the top destination ski resorts in the world, other parts of the province have been busy as well, developing destination mountain resorts that are attracting visitors from around the world.

In a number of recent speeches the Premier has spoken about potential for the growth of destination ski resorts in the Kootenays. Resorts like the Fernie resort and Red Mountain in Rossland have ski opportunities to rival anything in the world, as the member for East Kootenay will tell us. The economy of the Kootenays will certainly benefit greatly as those resorts develop further.

As an Okanagan boy, I know the Premier is right and the Kootenays will benefit, because I've seen it start to happen right in my own back yard. Okanagan-Vernon is, of course, home to Silver Star Mountain Resorts, one of the rising stars of the destination ski resort industry. Silver Star is only a 25-minute drive from downtown Vernon. Being fortunate to grow up in Vernon, I've been skiing there since I was five years old, and I actually grew up thinking everybody lived within about half an hour of fantastic skiing. I was sorely disappointed when, in fact, I moved away to go to university and found that here, when I was at UVic, you actually had to drive about three hours to get somewhere to ski.

Now, if I hadn't been going to Silver Star each year since I was a child, I certainly wouldn't recognize today's Silver Star Mountain as the hill I learned to ski on. Since the early 1980s what was a nice, relatively small family hill with a day lodge, T-bars and old, slow two-seater chairlifts has more than doubled its skiable area to over 2,700 acres, with on-hill accommodation in hostels, hotels, condominiums and homes; top-quality restaurants and pubs; retail shops; a conference centre; and state-of-the-art lift systems.

Each summer and fall the sounds of hammers and saws can be heard throughout Silver Star Village as the construction industry is at work adding condominium units and new homes. This last summer has been particularly busy, with Silver Star investing over \$10 million to upgrade two older, high-speed quad chairs by replacing one with a new, high-speed quad and the

other with a new, high-speed six-person chairlift that will reduce travel time by 20 percent and increase passengers to 3,000 people per hour. That will certainly make the locals happier, as it wasn't uncommon to hear grumbling in the lineup if you had to wait more than five minutes to get on. Certainly, that will come as a surprise to anybody that's ever been to some of the very major resorts, where you're probably waiting 45 minutes to an hour in some cases.

The new resort owners are planning a major expansion of accommodation on the hill which will, hopefully, be ready for the 2003-04 season, at a further investment of tens of millions of dollars. Silver Star certainly remains a nice family hill, but it's able to offer all the amenities a ski vacationer would want, along with terrain to challenge any skier or snowboarder from beginner to expert.

Silver Star has grown from a hill that played host to local skiers mainly on weekends to a year-round destination resort playing host to an ever-increasing number of foreign visitors. While even five years ago it was a novelty to ride up the chair with somebody from outside the Okanagan, it is now an unusual day if you don't meet some folks from Ontario, the United States, Europe and Australia all in a morning. Most importantly, all of these visitors are in awe of the quality of the ski experience they are getting in the Okanagan. Silver Star, in fact, has one of the highest visitor return rates of any mountain in North America.

All of this sounds great if you're a skier, but, "So what," you might say. Well, the construction activity alone adds millions of dollars into the local economy as local contractors, workers and material suppliers are kept busy meeting the demand at Silver Star. And of course, where there are visitors, there are opportunities for small business and employment. Many small businesses rely on the ski industry and the winter tourism opportunities throughout B.C.

With that, I believe my colleague the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services is going to add a little to this discussion.

[1010]

Hon. G. Abbott: First of all, I want to thank my friend and colleague for his excellent statement.

I want to begin with a confession, and that confession is that I am a Silver Star season pass holder and have been for a few years. Like the hon. member, I do come with some sentiment about Silver Star. There's no place that I enjoy being more on a Saturday — or if I could play hooky, any other day of the week — than Silver Star. It's an opportunity for me to reconnect with my kids and enjoy some of the finest skiing in the world.

Like the hon. member, I always enjoy meeting new people on the lifts, invariably as we're going back up to the top. I always start out with my kids, but a typical day would see them getting bored with my tortoise-like pace probably an hour or two into the day and ditching me, to put it bluntly. I do have an opportunity to meet some new people every time I go up in a lift.

I'm always astonished, like the hon. member, to meet people very often now from Ontario, because we have a direct flight from Toronto to Kelowna. Often they're from London, England, or any place in England or Europe. Increasingly commonly, they're from Australia as well.

We see people coming in from around the world to enjoy the world-class skiing we have to offer at not only Silver Star but many places in British Columbia. In fact, what I frequently hear from people as we go up the lift is that they are going to be skiing a couple of days at Silver Star, a couple of days at Sun Peaks, a couple of days at Big White and then perhaps over to Fernie or one of the world-class resorts in the Kootenays to enjoy the spectacular skiing there. It's not just a case of one resort competing against another. There are some real benefits that all of the hills enjoy by having great skiing throughout British Columbia.

Further, to really add my support to the member's thesis here, what we are going to see with the 2010 bid is not just an opportunity to enjoy hosting one of the greatest world-class events of sports that exists. We're also going to have an opportunity to unveil other parts of British Columbia to the rest of the world. People are going to come and take part in the very exciting events at the 2010 Olympics, and then they're going to take an opportunity to see the north of British Columbia, the Kootenays and the Okanagan. I'm sure they'll enjoy fabulous skiing in a whole range of areas across the province. It's going to be a huge win-win not just for Vancouver and Whistler but certainly for all of British Columbia.

There are a great number of benefits, as well, that come from hosting the Olympics. It's going to be a great source of economic development. It's a multi-year project getting ready for the games and hosting the games. We're going to enjoy a lot of new jobs and a lot of new economic development as a consequence of that.

Just as importantly, it's going to be an opportunity to expand our regional training programs across British Columbia. I have a son who, I'm sure, dreams of participating in the 2010 Olympics. He's in a regional training centre in Prince George. We want to see that regional training expanded as well.

Certainly, when you look at the Salt Lake City games, even companies in British Columbia benefited from telling the world about their products at those games. Can you imagine what a spectacular opportunity 2010 is going to be for businesses throughout British Columbia to tell them about all the good things they have to offer?

[1015]

The 2010 bid is going to be a great way to showcase British Columbia to the world. We've got world-class skiing everywhere across British Columbia, and we have a spectacular opportunity to show ourselves off.

I'm glad to rise today to share with the member his enthusiasm for Silver Star and for other hills in British Columbia. Silver Star is a fabulous place, and it's got a fabulous future. I know it's expanding every year.

There's a major expansion going on, and the member and I, as season pass holders at Silver Star, are going to enjoy the benefits of that expansion. It's all a reflection of the great resources we have in British Columbia. Like the hon. member, I look forward to continuing to enjoy the great benefits of living in this fabulous province.

T. Christensen: I want to thank the minister for his comments and offer my assistance in teaching him a thing or two if he needs to learn to keep up with his kids. I can say that quite easily, because my children aren't old enough yet that they're skiing. I'm still well ahead of them, but my time will come, I'm sure.

As the minister mentioned, Silver Star is really only one of many destination ski resort areas in the interior that are rapidly expanding to meet both domestic and international demand. In the Okanagan we're very fortunate to have Silver Star, but we have Big White in Kelowna and Apex in Penticton. Over in Kamloops there is, of course, Sun Peaks, which has undergone considerable expansion in the last few years.

If you move a little further north, you get up to Golden, where Kicking Horse resort is poised to become a major player in the destination ski resort business in North America. Of course, there are the many areas in the Kootenays that have great potential, as the member for East Kootenay will certainly tell you.

The Olympics does provide an incredible opportunity to show the world what British Columbia has to offer. In speaking with some of the people involved with Silver Star and Big White, I know they are excited about the potential spinoff benefits that could come to the Okanagan from the 2010 Olympics.

I was reading in the newspaper last week and surfing a bit on the Internet and found that Ski Utah has indicated they've seen an increase of 200 percent in the pre-season bookings for ski vacation resorts in Utah this year. They are attributing that to the exposure that Utah gained from the Salt Lake City games last spring.

In fact, Silver Star already has some links to the Winter Olympics. At the 2002 Games in Salt Lake City, Silver Star's award-winning grooming team was selected to groom the downhill and super G alpine ski courses. Anyone who has skied the back side of Silver Star at Putnam Creek, as I know the minister has, will know that the groomers of Silver Star have become experts at winch-grooming, where a cable and winch are used to pull the groomer up the slope and stop it from tipping over because of the steepness of the terrain. It's that expertise that went to Salt Lake and helped out with grooming the ski courses there.

Silver Star has also been a regular early-season training ground for Canada's Nordic and biathlon ski teams on the 105 kilometres of Nordic track offered at Silver Star and connecting to the neighbouring Sovereign Lakes cross-country ski area. In fact, I was up at Silver Star briefly on Saturday morning just to see if there was any snow yet, and there was really only a skiff. But when I was standing in the village, which is yet to open, a few cross-country skiers covered in

maple leaves came flying into the village. It was the Canadian cross-country ski team, which is already up there training.

I was also reading in the newspaper in Vernon that Canada's bronze medallist, Becky Scott, will be in Vernon in the middle of the month to continue her training at Silver Star.

In addition to the Canadian athletes, Silver Star has also been host to the United States team, the Swedish team, the German team and the Norwegian team, because those Nordic ski teams recognize the product we have to offer. The 2010 Games are going to expose the opportunities in British Columbia to the rest of the world, and I think that can only bring good things to all of us throughout the interior as well as to the Whistler-Blackcomb area.

URBAN-RURAL DIVIDE

R. Harris: I stand in the House to talk about an issue that we hear about more and more today, and that's what's sometimes referred to as the 250-604 divide, or what's known as the rural-urban split. There's no doubt that rural communities have been experiencing significant depopulation. The census last summer confirmed that. The fallout is especially large in the under-40 age group. These are the families and children that fill our schools and provide the critical mass necessary for other government services as well as what's necessary to support local businesses.

The facts are clear that this movement of people started back in 1995, long before we became government. The city of Kitimat in my riding saw the fifth-largest population drop in the province. This census has only confirmed what those of us who live in the north already knew, but it has woken up the media and the large urban centres to finally take notice of this trend. It is part of the awareness of the substance of the 250-604 divide.

[1020]

The reasons for rural decline are both economic as well as social. The previous government, in an effort to soothe the social conscience of the larger urban centres, implemented policy changes and regulations in a number of ministries. Policy changes in forestry, mining and environment crippled the economies of rural communities. More importantly, they made these changes with no strategy for rebuilding these economies. They brought in tax and regulatory regimes so that even where communities attempted to diversify, it was impossible for them to attract the investment necessary to make those shifts.

In the past, economic development has had more to do with politics than it did with sound economics. As a result, there has developed a culture of economic development by conflict rather than by consensus. A culture of mistrust that pits one region of the province against another has emerged. Communities have become competitors rather than working cooperatively on regional economic strategies.

The substance of the debate points to a more serious problem which has evolved over the years of having a political climate in this province that drove wedges between communities as well as regions. Rural communities have become suspicious, and rightly so, of how governments determine their spending priorities. As chair of the northern caucus and a representative of a rural riding, I certainly understand that frustration felt throughout the north.

Over the past 18 months I've also had an opportunity to meet a number of community leaders. Each of these representatives has told me of their frustrations in dealing with and even accessing government in Victoria over the last decade. This is a situation we have inherited and one that we must change, and I believe we are. This debate, though, couldn't be more evident than in the discussions around the Sea to Sky Highway and the Olympics. The historic fear in rural communities is that these projects will drain provincial resources at the expense of rural development. It is the basis that compels one region to oppose a project that may bring economic benefit to another region and ultimately to the province as a whole.

What has been lost in the discussion is that when any region of the province does well, we will all benefit. It is by increasing the size of the whole provincial economy that as a society we will improve the quality of life for all of the citizens of this province. In the northwest the northern health authority has just introduced renal dialysis, a new and very much needed service for the people of the northwest. It could be argued that this service is there not because the northwest has prospered — because this region certainly is still struggling — but it more possibly represents the successes experienced in other regions.

As a northern MLA and a member of a caucus representing MLAs from the ridings in the north, we've embarked on changing the face of government. We are trying to bring some common sense and reason to economic development across the north. We have engaged all of the rural communities, through the North Central Municipal Association, and we are developing working partnerships. We have committed to them to meet with them twice a year, participate in their annual convention and establish working committees on transportation as well as one to identify economic priorities.

We have engaged the northwest treaty tribal group and will be meeting with them in December in an effort to find common ground on a number of issues, especially around economic development. Their communities have been even harder hit, and the isolation they have felt is one that we as a government must bridge.

The northern caucus sits as a board member of the Northwest Corridor Development Corporation, a body made up of businessmen and political leaders from Alaska, B.C. and Alberta. The priority of this organization is the promotion and development of a transportation infrastructure strategy. It brings together industries that have the interest in enhancing and maximizing the transportation corridors of the north, and it identifies and quantifies the needs of provinces like

Alberta and Saskatchewan as well as Alaska around the movement of product from their regions to the ports in the northwest.

Within our own government, the introduction of regional transportation boards will help establish priorities within the north and within rural communities across this province. The Premier held an open dialogue forum on transportation this year in the Wosk Centre. This dialogue for the first time brought together federal, provincial and municipal politicians, first nations leaders and business people to talk about the transportation needs of this province as a whole. In November this year we will be holding a session on transportation in Prince George.

To start to get past the rural-urban divide in this province, governments must demonstrate, not just to rural communities but to all rural towns, that as a government their issues are important to us. We must use our relationships with the different groups in the north to bridge the discussions and bring some continuity and common sense to regional planning. We must begin to recognize the contribution and ideas that come from rural communities and must develop policies that reflect those values.

[1025]

We must continue to educate the larger city states on the relationship between their economy and ours. We have an opportunity and an obligation, through our education system, to ensure that every child learns about this great province and the industries that drive and sustain it. We must find a mechanism that in fact identifies the right investment in the right place at the right time, because as one region finds success, we must support and build on those successes. Only then will the tone of the debate subside.

R. Sultan: The member for Skeena has described the crisis of communities beyond what I call LMV, the lower mainland and Vancouver. The crisis derives, as he says, from declining resource industries, declining jobs, declining population. How can we turn things around? A lot depends on restoring health and vigour to our resource industries. Unless we change fundamental attitudes and policies, downward pressure will continue.

For decades, terms of trade have trended against resources, and the world is certainly not running out of base metals, energy or trees. That's reflected in their selling prices. Does this mean B.C.'s resource industry communities are doomed? I don't think so. It simply means that when global competitors are ranked as to costs, we have to be in that low-cost quartile. Our high-tech resource extractors can be globally competitive if we all — underline all — make the right decisions, and two of the biggest involve government: taxes and land use.

In the area of taxes, consider what happened to the mining industry, once B.C.'s biggest. Its decline accelerated when the Socreds, years ago, imposed a whopping big water royalty on Cominco. This certainly taught miners a lesson about doing business in B.C.

Many continue to believe the resource business is based on some sort of lush, unearned windfall. The theory of economic rent is still taught at local universities. Toss in layers of regulatory process, and our forest industry as well as our mining industry still stagger under that day. It's clear we have a way to go before the industries can support the regions.

In today's competitive world, once wages, return on capital, infrastructure, reforestation, decommissioning and first nations — not to mention risks — are compensated, there's precious little left over for government. If market forces were allowed full play, government should be happy collecting income taxes and letting it go at that.

The same is true of land use. The previous government achieved its goal of converting about 12 percent of British Columbia into parks and another 30 percent or so into protected areas with exclusionary features. Now, I love parks as much as anybody, but we must, from time to time, also earn a living and make a few additional bucks, as well, to pay our school teachers, our doctors and our nurses. Land use decisions must become friendlier if rural B.C. is to be sustained.

What can we do about declining population beyond LMV? One solution is the Elliott Lake formula, catering to our fastest-growing market segment: seniors. Another is to anticipate future opportunities for younger people as, I believe, a bigger chunk of life tilts away from the large urban centres due to communications, transportation and risk.

The communications revolution has just begun. Give the Internet another 50 years, and you won't recognize the place. Why fight the mob scene at Pearson airport when you can attend that Toronto meeting from Kitimat via virtual reality?

On the transportation front, if face-to-face is really necessary, electronic landing aids have overcome the twin bugaboos of regional air travel in this province: low clouds and high mountains.

On the risk front, how many more Moscows, 9/11s or Beiruts will occur before citizens conclude that smaller is safer with dispersion of where they choose to live? Does government have a role to play in reviving the regions? You bet it does.

[1030]

Aside from getting real with respect to the burden on our resource industries, other solutions could involve possibly putting regional direction into our labour-sponsored funds to capitalize fledgling new economy endeavours in the regions; upgrading the northern transportation corridor from Alberta to a containerized port of Prince Rupert; facing the facts of commerce along the Alberta border by adopting a phased-in geographic PST, the Lloydminster model; finally, introducing officials in Victoria to the splendours of life in that great big world outside by relocating one or two major ministries.

Mr. Speaker, to those beyond LMV, I say: welcome to the twenty-first century. The future can be wonderful, but we all must share the enthusiasm and concerns of the member for Skeena.

R. Harris: First of all, I'd like to thank the member for West Vancouver–Capilano for his comments, especially the last one. I could see the Minister of Transportation was certainly enjoying the concept of relocating to a community like Terrace or Dawson Creek to enjoy her stand in that portfolio.

I do appreciate the comments the member made, because he does talk about changing the face of rural B.C. The challenges around depopulation are not unique to British Columbia but in fact are across North America. It does address the issue of how in fact rural communities will look in the future. There's no doubt that resource industries are going to play a key role in revitalizing the north initially, but it's not going to be the only player and the only driver that's going to bring, really, populations back to these smaller communities. It's time to look at diversifying those interests in a very concrete way.

The member spoke about containerization, which is a project that the northern caucus and, I know, the Northwest Corridor Development Corp. and, I believe, even the NCMA have all identified as probably the single biggest project that could occur in the north, whether that happens in the private port of Kitimat or in Prince Rupert. This isn't an issue that competes those communities against each other. This is an issue that has that whole process competing against the San Franciscos, the Los Angeleses, the Seattles and the Vancouvers.

Containerization in the north will change the face of how investment is even looked at in B.C. All of a sudden, with containerization and the ability to move products both in and out, it'll change the way that investors view our infrastructure, our excessive and very low-cost land in relation to what it costs to locate in urban areas, especially around the lower mainland and the Fraser Valley. This holds the single greatest potential, I think, today to start the process of actually helping communities diversify, which in fact will bring in new skill sets and put new pressures on our colleges to offer more variety of courses. This, again, just continues to expand the labour base and the labour pool and the knowledge base of rural communities.

The member talked about technology and the role it'll play. Certainly, globally competitive industries are absolutely paramount. I think the Minister of Competition, Science and Enterprise's policy of extending high-speed Internet to 80 percent of this province in this term is exactly the kind of thing we have to do. Internet really does open up all of our communities to the world.

I think the initiatives we've taken in terms of what we're doing in forestry — today we're going to see the introduction of a bill dealing with the Forest Practices Code — are exactly the kind of policies that we as a government need to show to reinforce those resource industries. The initiatives taken by the Minister of Energy and Mines around creating single portals of entry, streamlining the regulatory environment and some of the tax changes are also issues that are going to help to stabilize those communities.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I think that rural communities have a great future. It does hinge on, in fact, changing the face of how we look. I think that as we change that face — and as a government we are doing the right things in that direction — we will start to tone down the debate which has been referred to as the urban-rural divide.

TRANSPORTATION

D. Hayer: I would like to speak today about the vision I have for the transportation corridor in my riding of Surrey-Tynehead, which will improve the quality of life for my constituents, assist businesses in my community and enhance the movement of goods and services not only through Surrey but also throughout the lower mainland and the rest of the province.

[1035]

As you well know, Mr. Speaker, the Trans-Canada Highway goes through the middle of my constituency. It carries the bulk of traffic to and from all points east of Vancouver. It is, for the Fraser Valley, the principal commuter route. For many hours a day it's a driver's nightmare, at times a virtual parking lot. This gridlock costs businesses millions of dollars a year in lost time; it deprives commuters of time that they could be spending with their families or at work.

I meet with my constituents frequently, and they often express their concerns about transportation woes and offer many thoughts and solutions about this. In fact, transportation is usually the topic at my monthly constituency breakfast meetings, which are held on the first Saturday of each month, as well as at many other meetings including my annual community barbecue which I held this summer, where more than 2,300 people attended and discussed the topics of concern to them — most importantly, transportation.

You know, I'm always open to meeting with my constituents to hear and listen to their many diverse points of view. Many, many people drop by my constituency office every day that I'm there, and they pass on their concerns and their encouragement to me and this government to stay the course of economic renewal. They do remind me, however, that a significant aspect of that renewal is getting people to their jobs and back home again stress-free. They remind me that a major component of economic growth is moving goods and services quickly and efficiently. I meet regularly with businesses and community organizations and attend many functions in my community. I meet with TransLink, with the mayor, with the council, and I work closely with them not only to come up with ideas and solutions but to gain a knowledge of their concerns and to pass on their concerns to my caucus colleagues and the government.

I have held, along with TransLink, a well-attended forum on the third crossing of the Fraser River. Just a week ago, I brought in the Assistant Deputy Minister of Transportation to answer questions and to hear the concerns of more than 400 people at the meeting of the Fraser Heights Community Association and other resi-

dents on the future options of the South Fraser perimeter road. There are these and many other solutions to ease the flow, increase the capacity and reduce the time spent in traffic snarls, but I know these solutions are not quick fixes. They will eventually come, I am certain, because the demand and the need are there.

I am also aware that some of these solutions are available only at great cost to the taxpayer. This government is faced with improving the traffic and transportation infrastructure that was built over 40 years ago, but only a few improvements have seen little changes in all those years. When the Port Mann Bridge was first opened, it was a marvel of engineering and a superb addition to our transportation infrastructure, and for many years it has served us well. Today, however, that beleaguered structure now carries over 120,000 cars per day. In my city of Surrey, now with a population of almost 400,000 and soon to be the largest city in the province, many, many of those residents use the Port Mann Bridge today, and many, many more will use it in the future.

Previous governments have made some attempts to improve the flow and increase capacity, but I fear our current Minister of Transportation faces a daunting task of meeting the demands of improvement that for the past 40 years have been largely ignored. I know the minister is aware of the demands and has future plans to widen the freeway through parts of Surrey, to upgrade interchanges such as 160th Street and 152nd Street, to complete the South Fraser perimeter road, to improve 176th Street and Pacific Highway from the U.S. border to the Trans-Canada freeway and to link the planned crossing of the Fraser River between Maple Ridge and my constituency.

[1040]

All these projects come at no small cost, but come they must for the benefit of all British Columbians. The business savings to the commercial and industrial carriers alone can justify their construction. The regrettable aspect, however, is that right now there is just not enough money in the provincial coffers to build them. I applaud the minister on her foresight and courage to look at public-private partnerships to bring some of these projects into existence. It is this kind of vision and forward thinking that makes me proud to be a member of this government.

Hon. J. Reid: It's through the initiatives of the member for Surrey-Tynehead and others who bring these discussions into the public realm — as people are aggravated, frustrated and wanting to move ahead, both on their own to get to work as commuters and also to move ahead economically...the movement of goods and services.... As the member so aptly stated, there has been a huge increase in traffic without an increase in infrastructure.

Through the discussions, as he mentioned, that have occurred in his riding, he's brought the concerns of people, who say they want this sooner rather than later and want to see some improvements now. For that reason, we believe this is a very suitable project,

the larger project, to go ahead and look at being able to have a private investor invest in this. We have large traffic volumes, as the member mentioned. It's a very real increase over the past: 120,000 cars a day now.

We have to have a way of being able to meet those needs. The province is working with the GVRD in developing a plan for this region, for this structure. As the member has suggested, there are many elements to this plan. Certainly, there has to be a third crossing of the Fraser River, and the GVRD process, TransLink process, is well underway in looking at that.

We also have to look at the North Fraser perimeter road and the South Fraser perimeter road and twinning the Port Mann Bridge, because as I talk to people from Delta all the way through the Fraser Valley, the problem compounds itself. We have to look at the entire system and find a way of bringing the entire system into a new order to be able to get that flow through.

While it's businesses, it's commuters as well. As the member stated, this is also a provincial concern, because it's the movement of goods and services between gateways. We have the ports; we have the rail yards; we have the international borders, as well as moving goods out through the road system to other provinces. So it all comes together wonderfully, except the infrastructure just does not have the capacity to deal with that.

Right now we are working on a memorandum of understanding with TransLink, with the GVRD, to develop who is going to do what as we move through this project. Certain parts of it fall under GVRD, and certain parts fall to the province. We are working that through because we believe this has to be kept together and developed as a partnership. We don't want to repeat each other's efforts.

The province is also working on a Treasury Board submission to be able to address the project and those elements of the project. Because of the Transportation Investment Act that was recently passed, we now have the framework to be able to approach this to develop investment strategies that will see this entire project come together, as I said, sooner rather than later, because it's very, very sorely needed.

D. Hayer: I'd like to thank the minister for her insightful comment. I look forward to touring her through my constituency in the near future to see firsthand some of the issues and concerns I have raised today. In fact, I would like to thank not only Minister Reid for her willingness to listen to and try to find solutions to the transportation concerns of my constituents, but I also want to thank the many other members of cabinet that have visited the Surrey-Tynehead constituency recently. The Premier has been in my riding twice, and I had the pleasure of hosting the Attorney General; the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Education and Deputy Premier; the Minister of Advanced Education; the Minister of Forests; the Minister of Competition, Science and Enterprise; the Minister of Children and Family Development; the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries; the Minister of Pro-

vincial Revenue; the Solicitor General and Minister of Public Safety; the Minister of Water, Land and Air Protection; the Minister of State for Deregulation; and the Minister of State for Women's Equality.

[1045]

It will be very special for me and for my constituents to also play host to the Minister of Transportation, and I look forward to her visit. Again, I want to express my appreciation for her thoughts today. Thank you very much.

VICTORIA ART GALLERY

J. Bray: I'm very pleased today to rise in the House and talk about an exciting proposal for my community of Victoria. I'm speaking of the Victoria Art Gallery proposal to build a new 33,000-square-foot satellite gallery right here in downtown Victoria. In fact, it's proposed to go right next door to the Legislature in a vacant lot that's been there for years, which is often referred to as the Y lot.

The Victoria Art Gallery would enter into an agreement with Concert Properties to build this exceptional facility next door to the new Marriott hotel, which has just begun construction — an exciting opportunity for downtown Victoria to add a whole new level of activity and excitement.

The art gallery would maintain its current Moss Street facility to provide improved vault space for the long-term care of the collection, administrative offices and the permanent collection and gallery. The art gallery would mount a \$10 million capital campaign to finance the construction of the new gallery as well as renovations to the current facility.

There are a number of exciting benefits to this proposal. At its current location the art gallery is restricted in terms of visitation and economic growth. With an additional new downtown location, the gallery can substantially improve its self-generated revenues by increasing traffic with a location close to other important tourist areas; blockbuster exhibitions that a large downtown gallery can attract; increasing public access to the gallery's permanent collection of over 16,000 works; increasing public programs and educational links to school districts, colleges and universities; and expansion of the gallery's profile to draw more corporate sponsorship and gifts of cash and art.

I commend the board of directors for recognizing the need to work on self-generated revenues, because that is the way a world-class facility will continue to grow, and the Victoria Art Gallery is moving in that direction in an exceptionally strong manner.

By maintaining the art gallery's Moss Street facility, the gallery continues to operate a large art storage area and administrative offices at low cost. The Moss Street location will continue to feature galleries with rotating exhibitions and continue to be the focal point of the annual Moss Street Paint-In. This is one of the many exceptional festivals that occurs in Victoria each year. The Moss Street Paint-In is an exceptional opportunity for artists from around the region and the Gulf Islands

to display their art for a day along Moss Street. Thousands of Victorians visit to look at and purchase the art. It's a great spot for local artists, and the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria serves as the anchor for that exceptional festival.

Because the Moss Street building is being retained, the new satellite facility will require little non-exhibition space, and this dramatically reduces the costs inherent in such a project. By constructing the art gallery exhibition site on the Y lot, the community will also benefit in many ways.

The creation of a cultural precinct located within walking distance of the world-class Royal British Columbia Museum, conference centre, Crystal Garden and Royal Theatre is an exceptional opportunity for us here. There will also be opportunities for Tourism Victoria, the regional tourism industry and regional initiatives undertaken by the various levels of government to draw new visitors to greater Victoria and economic benefits through job creation, both during construction of the new facility but also increasing art gallery staffing requirements for the ongoing operation of this new facility.

Easy access will also be available to this new satellite facility by public transportation, road links and — most importantly in my mind — being downtown, walking traffic and bicycle traffic. There will also be easy access with street parking, gallery parking, conference centre parking and nearby city parkade capacity. In other words, the location doesn't require any additional infrastructure in order to help people come to the gallery. The gallery will be going to where the people are.

[1050]

I strongly support this initiative by the board of directors of the Victoria Art Gallery. I believe this proposal would be one more strong addition to our downtown core. I believe it is in tune with government's cultural policy values, and let me quote just part of that policy, if I may:

"The province believes that culture is intrinsically valuable and worthy of public support. Culture creates the only true lasting record of our society and its aspirations. Through culture, we grow in understanding of ourselves and our fellow British Columbians. Artistic creativity is key to our development as individuals.

"The arts also promote social cohesion by providing a bridge between the diverse groups who have made their homes in British Columbia. Culture shapes our sense of identity and uniqueness as British Columbians. And cultural activities provide a forum for constructive social comment and public debate.

"The cultural sector is recognized as an economic good which is expanding and is consistent with the emerging economy. Culture is providing an increasing number of jobs in a knowledge-based, sustainable sector where employment is personally rewarding and satisfying. Culture is also a key part of the tourists' experience in British Columbia."

That last paragraph is particularly important for us here in Victoria. Also, the ability to hold blockbuster events in the shoulder seasons of spring and fall can greatly enhance our ability to draw visitors to Victoria.

Cultural tourists tend to be more affluent, stay longer and spend more. By adding a world-class exhibition space near our world-class museum, the Royal and McPherson theatres and with the building of a new multiplex here in Victoria, we have the major infrastructure needed to become a cultural tourist destination — not just a stop-off point, not just an addition point, but actually a destination for cultural tourists.

Support for the arts and the potential growth they could contribute to tourism is a sound economic investment. For my riding of Victoria-Beacon Hill, the arts represent a significant part of our local economy. By adding new displays of art and history, the gallery can provide unparalleled educational opportunities for young people not just here on the Island but throughout the province. Art can educate, art can inspire, and art can bring pleasure to the viewer. The proposal to build a new satellite gallery in the downtown can provide all of this to more people of the South Island and indeed for the entire province, and I believe it is one more example of where Victoria can lead the way in the development of new green, clean, sustainable economies.

Hon. G. Abbott: It's a great pleasure for me to rise and respond to the comments of my friend and colleague from Victoria-Beacon Hill. I certainly want to endorse his comments with respect to the addition to the Victoria Art Gallery and his comments with respect to arts and culture in British Columbia. I know the member is a great supporter of the arts in Victoria, because he's either in my office or tugging on my coat most days about helping out a little bit more with some of the very exciting things that they have going on in Victoria.

In response specifically to the expansion or creation of the satellite gallery in the downtown for the Victoria Art Gallery, I do think this is a tremendous opportunity for the gallery. They have obviously done an exemplary, terrific job in their Moss Street location, and it's very exciting that they are now proposing to add a downtown location as well. It will obviously allow a lot more people to see the great exhibits that are at Moss Street now and which will certainly expand in the new location downtown.

It will, as the member, I think, also correctly notes, provide some synergies with other great attractions that we have in Victoria. I want to highlight just for a moment the synergy that's going to be possible with the Royal B.C. Museum. That's an extremely exciting combination. If those two things go ahead as we hope, those two attractions will be just a couple of blocks apart, and obviously will build on one another and help make Victoria, in combination with a whole bunch of other stuff that goes on in Victoria, a cultural tourism destination — no question about it.

[1055]

The Royal B.C. Museum is one of the great jewels in the provincial crown. We are impressed every day with the quality of the exhibits which are provided there. Currently, we have the exhibit that celebrates Queen

Elizabeth's golden jubilee. Shortly we're going to be seeing the mother of all dinosaur exhibits as some of the great dinosaur exhibits from China are brought together for the first time anywhere in the world — with the exception, possibly, of China — to be shared here in Victoria. I think it's going to be a tremendously exciting exhibit, and of course we're encouraging children from all over British Columbia, western Canada and western North America to bring their parents in to share with them the excitement of life in the prehistoric world. That's going to be very exciting as well.

In terms of arts and cultural activity in British Columbia — and the member alluded to this — we're trying to do a couple of things with our arts and culture policies. One is to build a knowledge-based economy in the province — certainly, arts and culture are an important part of that — and enhance the quality of life in the communities across British Columbia. Arts and culture are such a big part of that. Even in my hometown of Sicamous, which is 3,100-and-something people, arts and culture are a big deal. Regularly there are art exhibits; there's theatre. These are the things that make life special in each of our towns.

Communities throughout British Columbia are increasingly responding to the need for cultural facilities. In the past couple of years numerous cultural facilities have been opened throughout the province — the Port Theatre in Nanaimo, the Performing Arts Centre in Vernon, the Two Rivers Gallery in Prince George, the Kelowna Art Gallery and the Winspear theatre in Sidney. Those are just a few of the great cultural amenities we've added in just the last couple of years.

The dynamic cultural sector has experienced growth rates over the past decade that almost doubled those of the overall employment rate. It's a very important part of our economy. We believe, as the member noted, that cultural tourism is going to be an essential element in the projected growth of tourism over the next decade.

The primary avenue of support from the provincial government to the arts and culture sector is through the British Columbia Arts Council. Annually we fund the council approximately \$11 million for community projects and organizations. I'm glad to say we've maintained that budget in 2002-03, despite the fiscal pressures we're under. The British Columbia Arts Council administers an independent merit-based adjudication system and the allocation of funds provided by government. Through it, approximately 800 recipients every year enjoy the funding of the arts council.

Arts are an exciting part of Victoria, and they are an exciting part of British Columbia. I join with the member in celebrating the things arts and culture bring to our communities and to our province.

J. Bray: I'd like to thank the minister for his comments. I'd like to thank the minister for his support of the concept of this proposal and, in fact, for supporting the arts in Victoria. The minister has been incredibly welcoming to me as I have come to see him several

times. We've been able to work very collaboratively on many projects here in Victoria.

The proposed new art facility for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria in downtown Victoria will bring many benefits — improved storage and administrative capabilities in the Moss Street location and 33,000 square feet of new exhibition space in the heart of the cultural capital of Vancouver Island. The ability to attract blockbuster events in the shoulder seasons, much like the Royal B.C. Museum did with Leonardo da Vinci, has huge potential to bring British Columbians, Canadians and Americans from the Pacific Northwest specifically up to Victoria to see the displays of various art exhibitions. The art gallery will be more able to prominently feature their permanent collection on a rotating basis. They have an excellent collection and are limited only by their space.

The new gallery will meet all current museum industry standards and guidelines in an attractive, non-density building that will have a substantial and positive presence in downtown Victoria. More public spaces will be available for educational opportunities, for the gift shop and for other retail-leased space. More visitors will be encouraged to visit the Moss Street location, and funds raised by the capital campaign will go to the new gallery as well as the maintenance and upgrading of the Moss Street facility.

[1100]

By dramatically doubling or tripling the current attendance at the Moss Street venue, which currently receives 50,000 visitors a year, the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria will become a major focal point of the community. It'll be a major cultural focal point but also a major economic focal point. I encourage all Victorians to support this exciting proposal. It is another example where Victoria can lead in the development of the new economy, the knowledge economy, and provide employment and opportunities for people right here in Victoria. The board of directors has worked very hard on this proposal for the art gallery. I believe that as we look to revitalize downtown, revitalize our tourism industry and find new opportunities, this proposal for a new satellite facility in downtown Victoria is another example of the community coming together to find solutions. I'm proud that the government is supporting this proposal. I give it my wholehearted support.

Second Reading of Bills

THE HUNTING AND FISHING HERITAGE ACT (continued)

W. McMahon: Since I closed debate on this bill last week, it is my privilege to open debate this morning on this very important piece of legislation.

As I stated last week, I support my East Kootenay colleague on his private member's bill, Bill M204. You have heard from many of my rural colleagues, and I do not want to reiterate to any degree what has been said by them. We have heard about conservation, we have

heard about economic opportunity, and we have heard about tradition.

I understand that there are urban and rural differences. I heard what the member for Victoria-Beacon Hill said last week as he stated his constituents' opposition to this bill. As I said last week, I moved from an urban area to a rural area 15 years ago. I may have struggled to support this bill 15 years ago, but not today.

Andy Pezderic from Golden, B.C., copied me on his response to my colleague from Victoria-Beacon Hill following his statement last week. I will read his letter into the record.

"I have not had the pleasure of meeting you, but if we ever do meet I would be happy to have the debate about hunting with you over a cup of coffee. I read all the MLAs' comments made in reference to Bill M204, the heritage right to hunt and fish, on the Hansard web page, and I must admit it causes me some trepidation and fear for the future when I read some of the words that you spoke yesterday.

"The rural-urban split between British Columbians is very real and a true threat to our future. Your comments cannot help but reinforce this belief in my mind. You speak of a debate in the community or throughout the province. I can tell you that this debate has been going on for many years already and will continue well into the future. Many urban people simply have different values than many rural people. The debate is simply one group of people trying to convince the other to adopt their particular values and lifestyle, neither group fully understanding the other's values.

"Although the urban masses will probably win this debate in the end, simply due to their greater numbers, the rural values and lifestyle will not go away and will always be in our souls. The common heritage that you spoke about probably does not exist when the issue of hunting is discussed between hunters and non- or anti-hunters. They will never be able to understand each other. I really believe that one must be a participant in the hunt at one time or another in order to fully understand the complexities of why people hunt, and why they are so passionate about hunting. Without true understanding the debate is useless and is really just an argument.

"There is a minority of urban people who hunt and fish, and there are many rural people who don't. There will always be a difference of opinion regarding the morality of hunting, and this will not go away as long as hunting and fishing exist, nor would it go away even if the urban-rural generic differences and lifestyle did not exist.

"I don't believe there is any future in exasperating ourselves by initiating a new debate on this issue and widening the urban-rural gap in the process. As with all such debates, the debate over the grizzly hunting moratorium, for example, only led to more hard feelings.

"In reference to your comments on recreational/trophy hunting and fishing, I must clarify an important point. It seems you may not be aware of this fact, but you mentioned hunting when it isn't used for food. Did you know that this is illegal under the Wildlife Act? All harvested game meat must, by law, be recovered by hunters and anglers. This illustrates a serious misconception about trophy hunting. This misconception is caused by a basic lack of understanding of hunting in the first place. Most hunters will harvest the big buck when the opportunity arises, but will still bring

home the venison and eat it. In the minds of hunters themselves, there is no difference between sustenance and trophy hunting. Some hunters just make a bigger effort to harvest the big buck than others.

[1105]

"That's all there really is to it. This applies to the guide-outfitter clients as well. Surprisingly, this also applies to grizzly bear and cougar hunting except that the hide, a very valuable and sought-after item, replaces the meat and, by law, must be recovered.

"Headhunting or leaving the meat to rot on the mountain did occur at one time, a very long time ago. It has been illegal for many, many years and is not done now by any legal hunter. The ones who would do this are now called poachers. Even the elite European clients of the guide-outfitters are not exempt from this, nor would we ever allow them to be.

"Gathering of food can be a lot of fun and a very exciting endeavour. It's not just a trip to Safeway for many British Columbians.

"I think it's highly likely that our differences of opinion on this topic are irreconcilable, but I hope my communication sheds a little light on how we gatherers, both rural and urban, feel about hunting and angling.

"Thanks for listening."

We have heard about the people who make a living from hunting and fishing. We have heard about the people who recreate. We have heard that hunters and anglers are the best and truest conservationists. We have heard about cultural awareness, so I won't reiterate what we've already heard.

As I stand to support this private member's bill, I would like to thank my colleague from East Kootenay for his commitment not only to his constituents but to those values so many hold dear throughout the province. I thank him for opening debate on this very important issue.

I. Chong: I, too, rise this morning to speak on Bill M204, The Hunting and Fishing Heritage Act. At first blush, you would expect that with a few "whereases" and a "therefore," the act would not have brought about as much debate as it has. Since it has, I'm going to venture my thoughts into this area as well.

First of all, I want to thank the member for East Kootenay, as well, for bringing forward this bill. It shows that he wishes to represent his constituents and offer a solution or at least an effort to bring their voice forward to this Legislature, which is, after all, the reason why we are elected to this wonderful precinct.

Yet as a member that has been elected for some time as well, I know my job is to represent my constituents and also bring their thoughts to the table. They are not all that much different than my colleagues representing the rural ridings. Although I represent an urban riding, I do have many constituents who enjoy recreational fishing and recreational hunting. I do agree that, as many of my colleagues have indicated, these activities form a part of our tradition and a part of our heritage and should be allowed to continue.

That is not to say that it is exclusive to the rural areas, because here in the greater Victoria capital region area I know of many hunters and fishers. The dif-

ference is that we just sometimes have to travel a little farther to get to those more remote areas. Sometimes it's only an hour. Sometimes it's three hours to travel farther up Island. Sometimes it requires a ferry ride over to the mainland to go in an area.

I do have family members who certainly fish and who have, in the past, hunted a great deal. The only reason why they no longer hunt is because of their age. I recall the excitement they had when they won a draw over on the mainland and were allowed to participate in that. I can tell you that they did it with much respect and with much integrity for the sport of hunting.

I guess the problem is that we call it a sport when, in fact, it's not meant to imply that it is done so without responsibility or that it is done without some conservation values. We who live in the urban areas have not changed in terms of our attitudes or our values towards conservation. Just because we live in an urban area does not mean that we don't respect those things. I would like to say that I don't think our values here in the urban areas differ from those in the rural areas. As I say, it's just a different approach we sometimes take.

[1110]

We've heard, as my colleagues have indicated, the many important aspects of recreational fishing and hunting: the tremendous economic opportunities that are brought forward; the many small businesses that we say drive our economy rely heavily on this, whether it's a small tackle shop, an outfitter business, a small marine repair place or even a rifle and gun maintenance shop.... All these small businesses contribute greatly to our economy, and they are responsible small businesses. I do believe so.

We also speak of the values that are provided to our economy. While I don't have as much to say about the hunting aspect, I can say that there is tremendous value placed on sport fishing, particularly when we take a look at the commercial fishers who will receive something like \$20 or maybe \$25 a pound for a fish. I can tell you that in sport fishing, it costs close to a \$1,000 a pound for the fish when you have the boat, the motors, the fuel, the tackle, the travel expenses and the repairs. This is why the Sport Fishing Institute of British Columbia has for a long time lobbied governments, both past and present, to ensure that they have a role to play in fishing, and I do believe they have that.

You would think that as an urban MLA, I'd never encountered sport fishing or hunting, but that's not true. I have been out on boats, and I have watched my friends who enjoy fishing, who respect the catch-and-release motto. I actually was very enlightened one day when I saw them catching one. When they went to release it back into the waters because of our salmon stocks being under threat, how very careful.... They spent 20 minutes reviving a fish — back and forth, back and forth in the water — to make sure that fish would survive in the water once it was released.

I think those are important points that we need to raise and put on the record. I appreciate my hon. colleague the member for Columbia River–Revelstoke having read into the record a letter she received from her

constituent, because I do want to express that there are more similarities than differences on how we view this.

As well, before I forget, I just want to say that I know the member for North Island has spoken on this. One of the areas he represents is Campbell River, and that is known.... Their slogan is that they're the fishing capital of Canada. I think many of us would beg to differ, but because they've got that as a slogan, I guess I have to respect that.

In the area of hunting, again, while there are many views on this, I think it's important to acknowledge that hunters are some of our best conservationists. They're on the ground, and they actually do see what is out there. In fact, they are able to report back to important wildlife management branch staff. They are integral to advising us as to what the real statistics are out there, which is probably why there was so much confusion over a year ago in one area, and that was in the grizzly bear area. Scientists were saying that the population was healthy; others were saying it wasn't. If it were not for our hunters on the ground, we might never have been able to pinpoint exactly what some of the numbers are.

While debate on this is still going on, I think we have to respect that everyone has a role to play here. Everyone can provide us with enough input for us to determine the best regulations that should be in place. This is one of the reasons why I supported our government lifting the moratorium and ensuring that those areas that were most susceptible, endangered areas, would be protected and continue with the moratorium. For other areas, where a population needs to be culled or better managed, I think we need the help of our on-ground, front-line people, so to speak, who will tell us what needs to be done and what kind of population we're looking at. They do provide input as to other endangered species. As they're out there, they will see that and provide us with that information.

I don't wish to carry on for too much longer. I know there are other speakers. I just want to say that as long as we can ensure that our wildlife is managed properly, with scientific peer reviews and with input from the public wherever necessary, we will be able to have a sustainable future in fishing and in hunting. My support of this bill is conditional on that.

[1115]

I have some concerns in that the bill doesn't provide as much information, perhaps, as some would like. We have the three "whereas" sections and a "therefore" part of the bill, which lead to the resolution of: "A person has the right to hunt and fish in accordance with the law." I think therein lies a bit of the confusion. What does "in accordance with the law" really refer to?

It may refer to being in accordance with Canadian laws. It may refer to being in accordance with laws that may be put forward in other jurisdictions, or it may be other bylaws. As I say, the public may be confused in this area and may wish this area to be strengthened. I would like to have seen more on that, perhaps even reference to some particular pieces of legislation we have — some provincial statutes — and to some organizations that help us provide the information.

While I do generally understand the reasons why this bill has been brought forward and do understand the concept, I still have some concerns I want to put on the record. It doesn't provide assurance that we will have a link to some, perhaps, other jurisdictional laws that we may wish to consider. If it's necessary to amend it in that fashion, I would hope the member for East Kootenay will be receptive to those ideas or that we can work closer in conjunction with the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection to ensure that everyone is comfortable with what this truly means.

With those comments, I gladly take my chair and yield the floor to my colleagues.

S. Orr: A lot has already been said on this issue by my colleague from Victoria-Beacon Hill last Monday and my colleague from Oak Bay-Gordon Head, so I will make this relatively brief. I do rise to speak on Bill M204, The Hunting and Fishing Heritage Act. This bill has actually created a huge amount of interest in my community. In fact, I was quite surprised at the amount of interest I've had on this — a constant barrage of phone calls, letters, e-mails and meetings.

Firstly, I do want to recognize — and I totally understand — why the member for East Kootenay has brought this forward, and I also commend him on his commitment to his constituents. The whole issue of urban versus rural when it comes to wildlife management, hunting and fishing is certainly a sensitive one. But as the member for East Kootenay listens to his constituents — and he represents them well — I also have to listen to my constituents of Victoria-Hillside, as I represent them.

I hear from my constituents on this issue about their concerns on hunting. My constituents truly do understand how hunting can deal with the management issue of wildlife, and we've had a lot of discussion on that. But what I hear most, and I hear this very loud and very clear, is the issue of trophy hunting. What my constituents are asking for is really a much larger public debate and input on the recreational side and the sport side of hunting. We realize that hunting and fishing should be recognized as a legitimate form of recreation, but big-game trophy hunting and fishing, in my constituents' view, is not a recreational sport.

I understand when they say to me that they just cannot rationalize taking the life of an animal in the same context as recreational sport. I'm very sensitive to what has been said to me, and I will reiterate that these are the people I represent. I'm sensitive that the people in this province make a living on trophy sport. Again, I commend the member for East Kootenay for bringing forward his constituents' issues, but my job is to make sure the voices of my constituents of Victoria-Hillside are being heard in this House. Because of this, I will be voting against Bill M204.

[1120]

S. Brice: I, too, am pleased to take time to address Bill M204 and, like all my colleagues, am bringing forward the issues raised by my own constituents. How-

ever, obviously we all come with a history, and certainly I have very many family members who are involved in recreational fishing and hunting. I have many constituents, also, who enjoy fishing and hunting. I was with a constituent last night who was looking forward to going hunting, with anticipation for what he could hunt and the enjoyment that we were all going to have subsequently in wonderful meals to follow. I look forward to that.

I agree that the outdoors folks are, in fact, the true stewards of our wilderness. Certainly, people I know who are hunters and fishers have a great respect for the environment. They are out in the environment.

Oftentimes it's intergenerational. I know folks in my own family who are involved in this activity and can hardly wait until the next generation comes up to take them hunting and fishing to pass on that wonderful heritage.

I also know through firsthand experience what effect this has on the economy. Obviously, the communities that host people coming to hunt and fish have an immediate impact on their economy, but everyone who is buying equipment is also adding to the general economy. I can remember as a very young child always being asked to provide more Deadly Dicks to members of my family who were going out and could count the number of Deadly Dicks they lost in a fishing expedition as to how successful it had been.

It's a good food source. I've enjoyed it, as I'm sure all members of this House have. I've had fish from Gold River. I've had moose from Mackenzie — wonderful, wonderful meals. I've had venison from Vancouver Island and ducks from Delta. I certainly support that, and I support the intention of the member for East Kootenay, and I compliment him on raising this issue.

Since this issue has been raised, I would be remiss if I did not go on record here as also bringing forward a concern that has been brought to my attention by my constituents and others living in the greater Victoria area. During the last campaign and since, it has been a consistent message to me that the idea of trophy hunting is abhorrent to the majority of the constituents I represent. I certainly respect the comments from my colleague from Columbia River-Revelstoke, and I appreciate that background as to what the letter of the law is. But I know for most people — albeit city folks, and that's who we are and proud of it — the idea of somebody coming and shooting a grizzly bear or a mountain sheep simply to stuff it and prop it up in their rumpus room back in Kentucky is really something they find quite abhorrent.

I will just close my remarks by saying I support the intent of Bill M204. I am on record as giving the line beyond which my constituents would, at least, register a concern, and I look forward to continued debate on this very interesting topic.

K. Krueger: I rise to affirm my support for the private member's bill brought by the member for East Kootenay. Over the last several weeks British Columbians have seen a very clear demonstration of the open

policy of this government where members are free to speak for or against legislation before the House and, also, to vote according to their consciences and the input that they get from their constituents. Certainly, we've heard from some members who aren't sure they're in favour of this bill and many who certainly are in favour, and I'm in the latter group supporting the legislation.

[1125]

Hunting and fishing is a fundamental part of many British Columbians' lives — always has been and hopefully always will be. I support their right to enjoy these activities. Not only do I like to see them have that opportunity to enjoy the activities, but I think there are tremendous payoffs for all British Columbians in terms of stewardship of the resource; in terms of crime prevention and being part of the observe, record and report process; helping out with forest fire prevention, as hunters and fishermen are frequently the ones who are first to observe these things; even helping with feeding programs when wildlife populations occasionally get in trouble in the winter.

My own background growing up in a homestead north of Fort St. John required me, as a very young boy, to walk with a rifle often to head out to the fields to pick my father up, to help bring equipment home and so on. I learned to shoot early. My mother was a crack shot. One of my earliest childhood memories was of her in a creek bed, grim-faced, as she picked off a population of magpies who had stolen all her chicks that morning.

I like handling guns. I like hunters; I like fishermen. I want them always to be able to enjoy these activities in our wonderful province. I respect that a lot of people have some qualms about these things, but if you aren't a vegetarian, then you really don't have any issue with hunters eating wild meat, in my opinion, as long as there is a good management of the resource by government, and I believe that is solidly in place.

There's been quite a bit of discussion about trophy hunting. I want to make it clear to my friends who represent urban ridings and to everyone, really, that trophy hunting done responsibly is no different than any other type of hunting except that the hunter is looking for a larger animal. As animals reach the end of their natural lives, nature is going to take its course with them regardless. A lot of people prize being able to bring home a big rack.

Many hunters, like myself when I hunt, are simply out to provide some meat to the freezer, to the family, and to enjoy the practice of being out in the bush with your family and friends and hunting. Trophy hunters are looking for a little bit more. There were bad old days, as the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke referenced, where people took the trophy and left the meat in the bush to rot. That is illegal, should never happen. I don't believe that goes on these days in British Columbia; at least I hope it doesn't. If it does, it's a criminal activity.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to affirm my support for the member for East Kootenay for this bill and for the

rights of people who enjoy hunting and fishing throughout British Columbia. On that note, for the time being, I move adjournment of debate.

Hon. K. Krueger moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. K. Falcon: I move that we stand down second reading on Bill M204 and Motion 5 and other private members' motions on notice from 1 to 14. I would call, therefore, Motion 18. I believe it's the member for Coquitlam-Maillardville.

Motion approved.

Deputy Speaker: The House calls Motion 18: be it resolved that the House support reducing the regulatory burden on B.C. business that impedes economic growth and job creation.

Motions on Notice

REGULATORY BURDEN ON B.C. BUSINESSES

R. Stewart: I move Motion 18 standing in my name. [Be it resolved that this House supports reducing the regulatory burden on BC Business that impedes economic growth and job creation.]

[1130]

R. Stewart: I spent some years working with business in creating jobs and economic opportunity in British Columbia, and I've worked with government at all levels in trying to reduce the needless negative impact of overregulation, to make the regulatory environment in this province less restrictive and less expensive.

The awkward challenge, as it was explained to me by a businessman in British Columbia, is when you're trying to remember whether — for what you're trying to do — there's a rule against it or a rule saying you have to do it. He described to me the challenge that he faced once when he could not get the answer to that question — whether, for what he wanted to do, there was a rule against it or a rule saying he had to do it. In fact, when he did get the answer, it turned out there were both. He both had to do it and was prohibited from doing it by two different regulations that are part of the regulatory framework here in British Columbia.

That sounds ridiculous, but I recall for my colleagues here in the Legislature a client who had approached his local government hoping to do something minor with one of his properties. This is a client of mine. After a week or so, staff got back to him with an answer that in fact was as I described a moment ago. Not only could he do what he was hoping to do, but he actually had to do it. They had found a regulation in which what he was proposing to do was, in fact, re-

quired of him to do, and they didn't know why he hadn't done it yet.

Government must recognize the impact that regulation has on business investment in this province. There are enormous costs associated with regulation. The costs certainly range from the cost of compliance with the regulation, the cost of enforcing the regulation — which is usually part of the cost of a permit fee imposed by the regulation — and the lost opportunities that exist whenever government steps in and restricts in some way the creation of jobs or the creation of economic opportunity to the unpredictability that exists whenever a regulatory framework puts in place sometimes complicated regulations that affect the way in which a business can respond in a normal business-like manner to the marketplace it faces, to the employment opportunities it hopes to create and to the economic environment of that market.

There are other costs as well, not just economic costs or costs in terms of money but costs in terms of time, because in responding to a market one must be timely. One must examine the market as it exists today and make timely decisions. One must move forward and implement those decisions in very many cases quickly, so as to reduce the cost of borrowing money and also to be able to meet the market that exists when the decision is made. Certainly, the time it takes to get an approval can be extremely expensive and an extremely large burden on the type of investment we are hoping to attract to British Columbia.

We see, as well, the downtime of a business, where a business may wish to enter into an investment or make a decision and go in a different direction but faces often significant downtime where they must wait for government or some other quasi-governmental agency to step forward with an answer to a question or give it a permit to do the thing it wants to do or some other decision that we look to government to make.

I listened earlier to the debate over the hunting and fishing bill put forward by one of the members in this House. I myself enjoy fishing. Actually, I probably subscribe to the catch-and-release philosophy, although I usually skip the first step.

An Hon. Member: We get it.

[1135]

R. Stewart: You get it.

Within recreational fishing, for example, I had someone come into my office, and he was quite upset about a new requirement that he stated our government was putting in place. It related to the manner in which a motorboat can be operated. It was actually quite some time before I was able to determine for him that this wasn't a provincial regulation, that this was a new federal regulation. From his perspective, he saw it as all the same: that government is imposing some regulation that, in his opinion — and I can't very well argue with him on this particular example — was of little use and likely to be an incredible burden not on

businesses in this case but on people going about a normal activity within our society.

We have examples over and over again where the ability of a business or a citizen to undertake a normal activity in our society is hampered by a regulation that everyone or almost everyone agrees doesn't seem to be based on a solid foundation — doesn't seem to have a reasonably good purpose for being.

Does that mean we ought to eliminate all regulation that affects business? Of course not. There are some regulations that are good, appropriate and vital to the health and welfare of our province and its people. I'm not against regulation by any means. In fact, when we look at the regulatory framework that the Minister of State for Deregulation is now examining in detail, going through hundreds of thousands of regulations.... If we look at those hundreds of thousands of regulations, we'll find some that were written by me. In fact, I wrote some of the regulations we're dealing with today as a consultant to the last government. I developed regulatory models and wrote regulations which now, today, affect business.

Interjection.

R. Stewart: No, I must debate that question. It is not entirely my fault. We also have to accept that regulations, generally speaking, are well-meaning — that regulations were probably put in place for a good purpose at the time and in some cases for a good purpose that still exists. There's a great many of the regulations — I would argue the majority — that have a very good and valid purpose that still exists and still supports the existence of those regulations.

Certainly, as our government embarks upon its plan to cut red tape by one-third, to eliminate one-third of the regulatory burden that affects business, we recognize at that point there are two-thirds of the regulatory burden — perhaps not quite two-thirds — that are perfectly legitimate and necessary parts of the way in which government functions and the way in which government can and should protect the people of this province.

I accept the value of regulation. I accept the value of regulation that is well-thought-out, with a good purpose and as minimal as one can achieve in order to achieve the purpose at hand. In fact, when I worked for government, when I did develop regulations, that was always our goal: to try to find a way in which we could achieve a specific purpose that was set out by an act in a way that was as small as possible, to put it simply — in a way which created as small a bureaucracy, which created as little paperwork as possible, so as to minimize the burden that a regulation would place upon a business.

That wasn't always the case within the framework that I was working. I was contracted by the previous government, and quite often we didn't see eye to eye on the way in which we could regulate the businesses and other parts of our economy. We certainly didn't always see eye to eye on the size of government and

the way in which we developed a larger or smaller government depending on the way in which we framed our regulations.

Certainly, I believe it is always possible to find a simple way to regulate as compared to another way, and there are always multiple options. We could establish a 500-person office to oversee something and make certain that every aspect of that thing gets inspected top to bottom and that everybody must apply for a permit to do anything related to that thing.

[1140]

It is also possible to establish a smaller framework that, perhaps, is more reasonable and timely. In fact, it is very possible and in many cases one of the most successful models that utilizes some measure of private sector involvement, some measure of accountability within the framework of a regulation that imposes upon business a duty to do the thing government wants it to do without actually having some overseer, some big government overseeing absolutely everything business does.

It isn't enough to talk about eliminating regulation. Our goal should be to examine regulation and its burden on all our citizens and our businesses, to continually review the impact of government regulation on our society, to make sure we balance our regulatory needs with the economic needs of our province and with the needs of the business community for an investment climate conducive to job creation — but, at the same time, balance that with the need government has to protect its citizens.

Now, how on earth does regulation affect job creation in British Columbia? Well, clearly, we are always facing a competitive environment both within this province and beyond our borders. I can't remember the author, but I remember reading a book in which he described another scenario, another environment. "Imagine an environment," he said, "where government supported your investments, where government dealt with you in a responsible way, where government made sure barriers to investment were eliminated wherever possible without impacting the environment, without actually challenging the protection government must provide." Essentially he said that was our competition — that is, three or four other countries of the world where they have embraced the knowledge we have, and they've taken away our competitive advantage by essentially saying: "We won't stand in the way of business investing in this as long as it's done prudently and fairly."

We have to, as a government and as a society, recognize that business investment is very mobile and that business investment can take place in British Columbia or in any other jurisdiction of the world, by and large — that if we want to build a plant, if we want to create a job in my riding of Coquitlam, the business that comes to Coquitlam and says, "We'd like to create jobs. We'd like to build a small manufacturing facility," has the world open to it. That business not only has Coquitlam and other communities across British Columbia, but it has Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba. It

has anywhere in Canada. That business has Washington State and any jurisdiction in the United States. That business will be wooed by jurisdiction upon jurisdiction across the world to come and set up office there.

We have to, as a province, make certain our regulatory framework doesn't stand in the way of that business choosing Coquitlam or choosing British Columbia as the place it will create those jobs. We have to make certain the regulatory framework doesn't needlessly stand in the way of the kinds of investment we need to move this province forward.

We saw that in the last ten years. We saw where British Columbia and the investment in British Columbia suffered from a business climate that most would describe as pretty poor, a climate where businesses could not be assured at all of getting a return on their investment because they couldn't even be assured of getting the plant finished and up and running. They didn't have any indication at all from government that their investment in this province and in the people of this province was welcome.

We want to change that. We certainly have to change that. We have to make sure that British Columbians welcome investment and that investment feels welcome. My motion, No. 18, is: "Be it resolved that this House supports reducing the regulatory burden on B.C. business that impedes economic growth and job creation." That's the unnecessary burden of regulation that impedes economic growth and job creation.

[1145]

It's clear to me — and I'm sure it's clear to most of my colleagues, if not all — that we are in a world economy. We must compete worldwide to make certain that jobs are created here. We must compete worldwide, as well, to make certain the companies that are here can export around the world. Certainly a company that creates widgets here in British Columbia and exports them faces the enormously good competition of the widget market in Texas, the widget market in Asia and various other places in the world.

The companies right here, the companies founded by British Columbians who would never choose to go elsewhere.... Even British Columbians who have created jobs here in this province and would never think of moving.... We have to make certain that their business can compete, so that when they export those products abroad or when they face imported products similar to theirs from other countries, their products can actually compete, and their products will be able to be purchased and sold on an open market and be competitive.

I believe that British Columbians can outdo any place in the world for the quality of goods we produce, for the skill of our employees, for the skill of our labour and for the ingenuity of the entrepreneurs that built this province and continue to.

At the end of the day, it's often not so much about them. We hear this all the time. It's not so much about whether I did what I had to do in my business or whether my employees were as good as they had to be to compete in this market. All too often the question

comes up: in what way did government do this? In what way did government stand in the way of a thriving business getting out there and meeting the world market head to head and winning? I will never be part of a government that, as a matter of its policy, stands in the way of businesses in British Columbia getting out there, working in the world economy, working in the world markets and winning.

I will never sit in a government that would do that, and I recognize that our government has made a commitment to getting our regulatory framework in order so that business in this province is welcome, so that business in this province can compete around the world and across Canada and so that business in this province can thrive and create the jobs we need to move forward.

We're welcoming the world. We welcomed them in 1986 with Expo 86. We welcomed the world. Every year we welcome the world with our tourism. But we're also going to be seeking to welcome the world in 2010. In 2010 we want the world to come to British Columbia and see what we've got here — not only the tremendous beauty of this great province, not only the tremendous diversity of its people, and certainly not limited to the tremendous activities and sporting facilities that we have in this province and will have in an expanded way in 2010. We want the world to come here and see a province that recognizes the value of business, recognizes the value of investment.

In 2010 we want to be the place where everyone wants to invest, where British Columbians are showing the world that we welcome investment. We welcome business. We welcome the kind of job creation that we know we got after 1986, when the world came to see a province that had an entrepreneurial spirit that was really second to none, a spirit that we lost in the nineties, an entrepreneurial spirit that we really haven't seen for ten years. It's been out there. It hasn't been here in this chamber, but it's been out there. The entrepreneurs of this province have fought as hard as they can to keep their heads above water, to work through a very difficult time economically. As much as possible they worked to make certain they could continue to create jobs and economic opportunities for themselves, certainly, but for their communities, for their families and for the province as a whole — an entire decade where it seemed that everything government did was trying to undo the great work of the entrepreneurial spirit in this province.

[1150]

I sat for ten years on the committee that writes the National Building Code of Canada in Ottawa. This is a committee of people from across the country. They do tremendous work. They create a model code that is the envy of the world, a code that sets out the way in which construction will take place. That's from highrise to small sheds and garages across this country.

When I was first appointed to the standing committee on part 9 of the National Building Code, it moved me that many of the decisions that body must make affect people's lives enormously. Not only do they af-

fect the businesses that must go out and interpret the code and build to it — and that's the same with every regulation, so they certainly affect the businesses that must comply with them — but every single decision we made affected consumers.

Now, we hoped the decisions we were making were affecting consumers positively and that they were yielding a safer environment in the home or a safer work environment in safer buildings that could withstand earthquake and fire, buildings that would be durable. We hoped that, and I still believe we did that. We also had to counter that and balance with that the cost of those measures, because there is no question.... Any engineer will tell you that the question is never how to build a building that will not fall down.

Anybody could build a building. You don't need an engineer to build a building that will not fall down. You need an engineer to build a building efficiently that will not fall down, and you need a building code that will be able, as efficiently as possible, to protect consumers so that we don't have housing costs going through the roof at a time when we're actually trying to protect the people that can no longer afford to live in these homes. The standing joke at the time was that the homes we were going to be developing were going to be the safest housing that no one could build, because consumers could no longer afford them. In every single decision we had to make, we had to balance. All too often we struggled to balance the costs of measures with the impact those measures would have on consumers and the safety of buildings.

That speaks to the final issue here, I believe, and that is the cost of regulations upon consumers. If our products in British Columbia become uncompetitive worldwide, then that's a problem, but if a manufacturer produces something locally for a local market and there is no competition, the cost of regulation still exists. The cost of regulation in monopoly situations still exists. Those regulations still get passed on to consumers, and consumers are still faced with the fact that money is being taken out of their pockets by regulations to be spent on things that government thinks are good for them.

Time and time again we see regulations, and we see them now as this House starts to cut through the regulatory framework and red tape that this province has developed over the years. We see example after example where a regulation seeks to spend consumers' money or a business's money on things that government thinks are good, and those are great. There are many cases where that ought to be done. It is the right thing to do. But all too often those decisions are made without considering the cost-effectiveness of the regulation, the cost-effectiveness of compliance with the regulation or with the enforcement of the regulation.

In those circumstances we must stand up as a government and say no. Consumers need protection not only from the kinds of risk this regulation is set up to protect them from, but sometimes consumers need protection from the regulations themselves. This isn't about regulation versus job creation. We can have both.

We can have a regulatory environment that protects our citizens and our society while at the same time giving a measure of predictability to entrepreneurs and those who are willing to invest in our province and in its future.

Noting the time, I move adjournment of debate.

R. Stewart moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. K. Falcon moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

The House adjourned at 11:55 a.m.