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3RD SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2002

The House met at 10:05 a.m.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

Prayers.

Private Members' Statements

AGRITOURISM

V. Roddick: My presentation in Prince George on November 16 at the first annual B.C. Natural Resource Forum and my statement today are to get people to think outside the box on our prime, or number one, natural resource: agriculture.

Need I remind all of you that we actually still have to eat to live? Agritourism has been touted as a means of helping to sustain family farms and ranches.

We must remember that farmers and ranchers are stewards of the soil, which must remain in good heart. Agriculture virtually led the industrial revolution and has fully embraced the technological revolution, but to what end? We did it altruistically to feed a starving world, and what it has achieved is to drive returns to the grower lower and lower, so that industry has to look at such ideas as agritourism for added income.

Our farmers and ranchers have the health and wealth of our nation in their hands. We as consumers should be doing everything in our power to promote their economic well-being. We should be concerned that food distribution is getting into fewer and fewer hands, resulting, for example, in our local lettuce being plowed up in the summer while our supermarkets sell lettuce that has burned diesel up the I-5 from California, a delivery distance of over 1,000 miles compared to 17 miles from our local producers.

What is this doing to our environment and our health? Farmers and ranchers are attacked as polluters, when in fact they are our true conservationists. Environmental groups should be thanking farmers and ranchers. They should be investing in our wonderful, sustainable natural resource. If we went 100 percent organic as they suggest, there wouldn't be one square inch of land left for wildlife.

Food safety is extremely important. That is just what food should be — safe — wherever its origin. Why are certain foods allowed into this country with X part per million of this or that chemical on them, when the same products produced here in this country are allowed zero parts per million? We are encouraging others to use substances banned in our country to compete against our local producers, and yet we say that we are concerned about food safety and our health.

Agritourism is a worthwhile investment, but if we are to maintain a separate country, we need to maintain our own food source. Somehow we truly need to bring back the term "grocer" as opposed to the term "supermarket." A grocer has genuine interest in good-quality food, with taste.

Our industry has allowed the word "quality" to mean shelf life. A perfect example is a variety called Nantes carrots, which are big, crisp, beautiful-tasting carrots. You don't find them in a supermarket because they are crisp and crunchy, and they break. Their shelf life is negligible, so we have those long, thin, wobbly carrots — not good.

There is no such thing, also, as non-fat yogurt. Read the label. It's impossible. Yogurt is yogurt. You cannot change the natural formula.

[1010]

The industry has been led by snake-oil salesmen who have bamboozled the general public to think if they drink diet Coke and eat oleic potato chips, non-fat yogurt and margarine instead of butter, they can eat as much as they want. Our health care professionals and educators need to work with industry to promote overall health and well-being. After all, we are what we eat. Look at our high-tech breeds of dairy cows, chickens, pigs, cattle and, most importantly in our family, race-horses. They all eat better, nutritionally, than most of us do.

Food additives are a huge issue. Studies published in *The Lancet* recently are corroborating what many of us have been concerned about for years. Some 90 percent of the money that Americans spend on food is to buy processed food. The New Jersey turnpike runs through the heart of "flavour alley," as it's referred to. Hey, we've come a long way from the first chemical flavouring compound, grape Kool-Aid — or have we, Mr. Speaker? Has culture lost control of its products?

Agriculture is the number one sustainable and renewable resource, not the chemical companies. Can we regain our credibility? Look at genetically modified foods. They've been screwed up by the big corporations trying to ram them down our collective throats. How can we tap into that fabulous people-power and get them to support our basic, most important natural resource — agriculture? I look forward to the comments of my colleague from North Delta.

R. Masi: Following that, I certainly must concur with the growth of agritourism. We've had a tremendous increase in farm stores across the province. Of course, everyone knows about the famous Okanagan Valley, the Fraser Valley and Vancouver Island, the wine industries right across the province, the fruit industry and the ranching tourism industry. You know, it's a long stretch, but I think the horse-racing industry is also a great tourism draw. It is agriculturally based. There's no question about that.

In reference to nutrition and our food products, quick convenience products are undeniably helpful in this time-crunched world. Luckily for those of us trying to eat healthfully, the popularity of healthy packaged foods has grown — now, I underline healthy packaged foods — expanding into almost every food section from snacks to frozen foods through to canned goods and packaged pastas.

An important consideration before you buy, however, is the amount and type of processing that your food choices undergo. Most conventional food processors, distributors and retailers see food as a raw material to be shaped into products that meet either real or perceived consumer needs. Conventional food manufacturing involves a number of processes, including heating and acid use, that can denature and destroy food components.

Many packaged products on the Canadian market have nutrition information labels that provide details on fats, carbohydrates, sodium and potassium values and, on occasion, information on vitamin and mineral content. They are good for comparative purposes. The ingredients on the label are listed, beginning with the most abundant by weight, followed by the next abundant and so on. Poorer product choices tend to list processed grain products such as bleached white flour, sugar, fructose and hydrogenated oils as major ingredients. The presence of MSG, artificial flavours, colours or preservatives also points to a nutritionally inferior product.

[1015]

In summary, when you make that trip down the grocery aisle, be discerning. Read labels and compare. Look for minimally processed and readily identifiable ingredients. Some examples of healthy foods are these.

Salmon and other cold-water fish — just brain food? Hardly. Fish with omega-3 fatty acids play an influential role in preventing and treating a wide range of diseases. For example, omega-3 fatty acids can decrease the levels of artery-damaging triglycerides and lower blood-pressure readings.

Spinach and other dark leafy greens. "Eat your veggies — dark green leafy ones," was something your mother told you to do. Besides fibre and antioxidant vitamins E and C, dark greens supply folate, a B vitamin that lowers the blood levels of an artery-damaging protein called homocysteine. Folate is also linked to protection against colon and breast cancer.

Flax seed meal. Good things come in small packages. That's especially so with these small brown seeds. Their soluble fibre lowers blood cholesterol and regulates blood sugar. The oil contained is of the omega-3 fatty acid variety.

Tomato products have been shown to decrease the risk of prostate cancer.

Tea. Drinking tea on a regular basis is associated with an increased rate of survival following a heart attack.

Legumes. Dried peas, beans and lentils simply don't get the respect they deserve. Legumes are potent in their blood cholesterol-lowering and blood sugar-regulation actions as well.

Nuts and seeds, unfairly banished from low-fat menus, are once again reclaiming their nutritional status. Choose walnuts, with their omega-3 fatty acids.

Blueberries, cranberries and other berries supply powerful anti-aging compounds. Other research shows that blueberries may also help to reverse the short-term memory loss associated with aging.

I've noticed during the session that the awareness level of healthy eating and general fitness in the House has generally increased. I refer specifically to the weight-reduction and healthy-eating program instituted by the member for Malahat-Juan de Fuca. Many members joined in the program and benefited greatly, both in their overall level of fitness and their mental attitude. This, in turn, has had a direct impact on energy and work levels. Even some members of the press gallery have turned the page and are on the cutting edge of good eating.

In conclusion, smart eating habits and good farming practices go hand in hand with the drive to a healthier, happier society. Thank you.

V. Roddick: Many thanks for your important and thought-provoking input. We should all listen up.

I have a couple of thoughts for everyone to digest. Firstly, only 21 percent of total food sales in the U.S. goes back to the farmers. My understanding is that that is about the same in Canada. The U.S.'s disposable income spent on food is 10.9 percent. Canada's is 9.8 percent, the lowest in the world. If we took these figures and upped them even one measly percent, think what it would do for farm income. There would be money to invest in farm business, in a career in farming. Farmers and ranchers need salespeople, technicians, managers, office workers, communications, science and technology. They can't do this without cash and investment. Let's make a commitment to have the main resource of the entire world become a major player in this province and in our country. We still have to eat to live.

Secondly, 80 percent of students do not attend university. Here is where we can capitalize. Advanced Education minister Shirley Bond is doing a sterling job promoting advanced education in every — pardon the pun — field. We need career days for agriculture in all high schools. We need colleges to reach out to the agricultural community to encourage it to participate in knowledge, growth and value-added agricultural businesses that include agritourism, wineries, organics, greenhouses and farm stores to bring back taste and genuine quality to our food and, therefore, to our health. It's limitless, because we still have to eat to live.

Thank you for listening to my rant of the day. I hope it gets your creative juices flowing. Raise a glass of B.C. wine with your B.C.-grown produce and cook for yourself. You'll be the healthier for it.

RURAL B.C.

W. Cobb: I do want to talk today about the future of rural B.C. and just to advise the previous speaker that we have all the land available for her to expand her opportunities.

[1020]

We are told that urbanization is a global phenomenon, so we are not unique here in B.C. or Canada, for that matter. I listened with interest a week or so ago to the statements made by my colleague from Skeena about the opportunities and the rebuild of the economy after ten years of degradation.

When I started in the workforce, piling lumber and at the end of the green chain, we sorted and piled the lumber by hand. Today one sits pushing buttons, and lumber is sorted and stacked automatically. The resource industry is a different business than it was 20 or 30 years ago, but the goods provided are still very much in demand. It just takes fewer people to produce the wealth.

The member for Skeena also commented.... His comments related to the continuation and expansion of that type of industry. According to the report from Urban Futures, we need to do that, but we also need to do some other things. I want to quote from some of the remarks made by Mr. Baxter. The Urban Futures Institute concludes that commodities from rural B.C. remain the linchpin of the province's economy, even though many non-urban communities are experiencing hard times and dramatic population declines. Rural British Columbia continues to make a "disproportionate contribution to the province's international export income. The big engines of economic growth in the province remain the resource regions," said the report.

He also went on to say that the service economy accounted for only 21 percent of the province's international exports over the past decade. The export of goods provided 79 percent of the export economy with forest products, amounting to 43 percent of that income.

His findings ran counter to the attitude in the 604 area code that we are less reliant on the resource economy because we have the cruise ship and high-tech businesses, but what we don't see are the logs, the electricity, the natural gas, the cranberries going out. As he said, he had put a disproportionate weight on the service economy, just like every other urbanite.

Over the past decade out of the total provincial annual average of \$33.8 billion in international exports, 71 percent came from non-urban B.C. Given the dependencies of the cities on exports income generated by work done in the hinterlands, which he called them — we prefer to call them the heartlands of B.C. — he concluded that politicians should ensure that rural B.C. is able to attract the people and investment required to sustain the resource-based economy.

I want to make some suggestions on how we may be able to curtail this movement of the people away from rural B.C. The Minister of Competition, Science and Enterprise is challenged with providing high-speed broadband Internet access as part of our transportation integration plan. This will enable the fast-growing technology industry to operate in rural settings, which in my mind has a far better and healthier lifestyle.

We have begun the trek of bridging the gap between the 604 and 250 area codes, as Baxter suggested. We have a northern, a Kootenay and an interior caucus to find the shortfalls and also our common interests. The Minister of Advanced Education has just announced the ability to get a university degree on the Internet through open learning. This will be further facilitated with the expansion of the information highway and will not only assist in making advanced edu-

cation more accessible but will allow students to stay in their communities while doing so.

[1025]

What I'm asking and encouraging is for this idea to be translated to the other challenges and realignments as we move to a more efficient government. I ask each and every minister and senior staff to think about the possibilities as we develop these regional centres.

Rural B.C. has, in most cases, less expensive rent to relocate these offices. With the declining enrolment in schools, class space is available for children, which in turn alleviates the need to build new facilities in urban settings. Health care facilities are sitting with many vacant beds that, except for very specialized illnesses, can be provided with little or no waiting list. We have a far lesser crime rate. We have a much cleaner environment. The information highway goes in both directions, and with the expanded network, I can see absolutely no reason why we should not be able to expand rural B.C. and also put some of these decision-makers out in the areas so they can better understand the impact they have as we make these necessary changes.

In conclusion, I once again encourage every private member, cabinet minister and senior staff to consider these possibilities in future decisions.

P. Bell: I think I'm in a unique position to respond to this statement, because I actually went in the opposite direction from the majority of folks in British Columbia. I went from urban British Columbia to rural British Columbia in my life, having grown up in Vancouver and relocated to Prince George.

You know, I'd like to highlight one of the things the member for Cariboo South pointed out, because I think this is particularly relevant. We're so concerned, and justifiably so, about the depopulation of rural British Columbia. What he suggested was that, in fact, it requires fewer people to produce a thousand board feet of lumber today than it did five or ten years ago, and it takes fewer people to produce a tonne of coal or a tonne of mineral concentrate now than it did five or ten years ago. You know, that actually is progress, and that's what has to occur.

In order for us to develop our industries in the north and grow the north and make it more prosperous, in fact what we have to do is develop new industries and look for new opportunities within those industries. I think that's really what the member for Cariboo South is saying, and I think he's right on the money.

Really, for me I guess there are four key opportunities I would like to highlight in rural British Columbia or northern British Columbia specifically. Certainly, I'd like to start out by commenting on the mining industry. You know, if you go back to the early 1990s, we had 30 operating mines in British Columbia. Today we have 11. Clearly, that came as a result of the policies and decisions that were made during the 1990s by a previous government, but we can bring that back.

We've done some significant things that are starting to yield some benefits, albeit slowly. There is progress

being made. The removal of PST on equipment and machinery, I can tell you for a fact, had a big impact on the decisions of various mines in the province to refit their equipment, to buy new equipment and to make it more flexible and actually increase productivity. I think that was a very positive thing. The 20 percent flow-through share credit had a huge impact on exploration even this year. I know a number of companies that took advantage of that change, and it certainly had an impact in my end of the world, with exploration going on at Kemess, at Lorraine and in the northern part of the province. There were some big benefits there.

Last but not least is the attitude of a go and no-go zone in the province. This is not something that's really been highlighted, but I think it's important, as we move forward, that the mining industry clearly understands that what we're saying is the only part of the province that is not available to mining is that roughly 13 percent, or slightly less than 13 percent, that we would refer to as parks. I think that's very good.

The oil and gas industry, as well, is very, very positive. The new ventures branch appointed by the Minister of Energy and Mines has done some great things. The interior basins, the Nechako and the Bowser basin, are showing good potential, and that offers big opportunities.

In the forestry end of the world I know the Minister of Forests has been working extremely hard on the results-based code. I was very pleased to see that it was passed last week, albeit in my absence. I think it has struck a very unique balance. It was a lot of effort, I know, on the part of the minister and his staff, but I think that will lead us into the future in terms of forest renewal here in the province.

[1030]

The final thing I want to highlight, which is a unique opportunity for us in rural British Columbia and specifically northern British Columbia, is the University of Northern British Columbia. The Minister of Advanced Education has done a wonderful job preparing the new northern medical program. I was fortunate to be at the unveiling of the new building that will house the northern medical program this last Thursday. A \$12 million investment as well as a \$5 million implementation fund training doctors in the north for rural British Columbia will ensure that those doctors stay in the north, and I think that's a very, very positive thing. Certainly, there's the teachers program at UNBC. I could go on and on.

Ultimately, all of these things need to be fired through technology, and people do not view technology as being a key driver in the north. But without technology, we won't have a mining industry, we won't have an energy industry, we won't have a forest industry, and we certainly wouldn't have UNBC.

Through the technological component, it's enabling us to move forward, and I look forward to very, very positive things in the not-so-distant future in the north.

W. Cobb: I thank the member for Prince George North for his comments. I know we've come a long

way. We've got a long way to go, but we are bridging that gap between the two area codes.

I recall one of the comments.... I think it was made by one of the presenters at the budget committee when they talked about decentralization. In many cases for economies of scale and efficiencies, it's probably better to centralize, but my point is that I can see no foreseeable reason why that centralization cannot occur in many of our small communities.

The member for Yale-Lillooet is heading a committee to discuss small-town B.C. and these possibilities. On the weekend in Prince George, we were at the transportation forum, and someone there indicated they saw no reason why a Crown corporation like B.C. Rail could not better serve its customers from anywhere other than the lower mainland.

Once again, I encourage all of us to consider the possibilities and the opportunities for all of us in the future deliberations for British Columbia. Thank you.

CANADIAN FLEET PACIFIC

A. Hamilton: Canadian Forces Base Esquimalt, commonly referred to as Naden or the Dockyard — which also includes Workpoint in Esquimalt, Belmont Park in Colwood and Rocky Point in Metchosin — is an important part of my constituency and, indeed, of British Columbia and all of Canada.

While I may speak of the economic impact of the base and the amount of federal money that it brings, today I want to speak about what the men and women who work there are doing for their fellow British Columbians and, indeed, all Canadians. Canada is a maritime nation with the longest coastline in the world. The Canadian navy on the Pacific coast has its headquarters at HMC Dockyard, Esquimalt. The men and women of the Canadian Fleet Pacific are tasked with a variety of important missions. Nationally, ships and aircraft perform sovereignty patrols along the 27,000 kilometres of British Columbia coastline in support of the RCMP, the Department of Fisheries and Environment Canada.

The fleet is composed of five patrol frigates, two command and control destroyers, one supply ship, six maritime coastal defence vessels and one sail-training yacht. The rescue coordination centre makes its home in Dockyard and coordinates search and rescue for the province of British Columbia and the Yukon.

After September 11, the level of activity, the intensity of purpose of the civilian and military employees at CFB Esquimalt was pushed to a level not experienced since the Korean War, when the first military units to be deployed to that conflict departed from Esquimalt in July 1950. In the past year six ships and over 1,500 sailors, soldiers and air crew who are residents of the province, and mostly from my constituency, have served halfway around the world as part of Operation APOLLO, the Canadian name for our contribution to the war against terrorism. For six months of the past year, the Canadian task force group in the Gulf of Oman has comprised ships and personnel from Esquimalt.

[1035]

Now, some might believe that it is the American forces only that are involved in what we see on CNN, reported as Operation Enduring Freedom, and that the Americans do this by themselves. Not so. According to the September edition of *Proceedings*, a publication of the United States Naval Institute, you may not know that international naval support to the war on terrorism has involved nearly 100 ships from 17 nations helping the United States navy accomplish missions it could not have done alone. In addition, there are over 50 other nations supporting the global effort to defeat terrorism. This prestigious publication goes on to make several references to the Canadian navy and particularly the Esquimalt-based ship HMCS *Vancouver*, the first west-coast ship on station, as an equal member of the USS *John C. Stennis* carrier battle group.

Even more interesting is the nature of the contribution of the Canadian navy. Early in the campaign the Canadian commander coordinated important missions such as the defence of the amphibious forces that entered Afghanistan through the first phase of the land operations. As that requirement became less critical, Canadian units became available to undertake a key role in the leadership interdiction mission that could keep al-Qaeda personnel from escaping by sea through a huge area of 80,000 square miles. Our Canadian ships were sought out as a logical first choice for this duty as the Canadian navy is trained and orientated as a multi-purpose force. Further, Canadian rules of engagement and the ships' communications equipment are both closely matched to the United States forces. The Canadian task group commander frequently has other coalition warships, including United States warships, under his direct control.

The citizens of British Columbia of the twenty-first century have roots that extend around the world. They would be surprised and proud to learn that our Canadian navy is operating with and in many cases leading groups of ships that represent Italy, Netherlands, France, Greece, Australia, the Bahrain, United Kingdom, Spain, Germany and Japan. Canadian units and United States units are able to maintain nearly continuous communications and share vital information through the use of the coalition-wide area network that allows real-time data communications through super-high frequency communication paths, provides real-time websites, chat and e-mail. The Canadian version of this technology was developed right here in British Columbia. As a result, our Canadian ships are major contributors to the leadership interdiction mission. The news reports of HMCS *Algonquin* detaining suspected Taliban are the result of the value of a homegrown capability.

I am very proud of the men and women of my constituency who have been away from their families and homes for as long as eight months during the last year. They exemplify the naval tradition and history of this province and are as much heroes as their forebears, including Captain Vancouver and Captain Cook, the men who crewed the submarines *CC1* and *CC2* that

were purchased by our predecessors in this Legislature on the eve of the First World War, the crew of HMCS *Rainbow*, the first Royal Canadian Navy ship to enter Esquimalt Harbour, and all those who followed during the Second World War, Korea and the Cold War, with its ballistic submarine menace and peace-making operations, all of which is part of the naval and military heritage that is embedded in the fibre of my constituency.

I look forward to the comments of my colleague from Okanagan-Vernon.

T. Christensen: It's always a pleasure to have an opportunity to respond to private members' statements and hear what's going on in the constituencies of other members of the House. It's probably a bit of a curiosity as to why I, the member for Okanagan-Vernon, a community in the interior of the province, would be responding to words about the Canadian Pacific fleet. As far as I know, we're not about to have a navy on Okanagan Lake, although it wouldn't be bad for the local economy, I suspect. In any event, it is a pleasure to have an opportunity to respond, and I want to thank the member for Esquimalt-Metchosin for speaking about the Canadian Fleet Pacific here today and bringing to all of us some awareness of the work that they do and the importance of that particular group to his constituency and, as the member said, to all of Canada.

[1040]

There's been a lot of discussion in the last few months — and it seems to come in waves in the media — about the Canadian military in general, whether that's the navy, the army or otherwise. Often the commentary we hear in the media tends to talk about the problems and underfunding and those sorts of situations, and it tends to focus, perhaps, on perceived incapacities or perceived deficiencies in our military capability. I think it's really important that all Canadians, and in particular those of us who serve our constituents in a Legislature in any part of the country, take a step back from that criticism of our military and focus on the individuals who serve.

If we focus on the individuals who serve, the individual men and women who serve in many capacities in our military throughout this country and, increasingly, overseas, what we find is that we have some of the best personnel in the world. In fact, what I've found in the little research I've done is that the folks who serve in the Canadian military — whether it's part of Canadian Fleet Pacific, other naval fleets from the east coast or other parts of our military — are very highly valued for the level of their training and the individual skill they bring to the work they do.

As the member indicated, our Canadian Fleet Pacific is in fact working with or leading groups of ships from many other countries around the world. That is simply a reflection of the ability of the personnel we have out there and their high level of skill and ability to get the job done. In fact, the Canadian navy is participating in training exercises around the world on a year-to-year basis. We don't tend to hear much about

that, but in every case what we hear from those other countries and their military leaders is that the Canadian personnel always do our country a great honour and exemplify the term "service" and, certainly, the ability we expect.

I've had some opportunity to visit different bases around the country, just here and there, more from family connections than otherwise, including Greenwood in Nova Scotia and Comox. I've had the pleasure to go out and take a quick look around the base in Esquimalt. I'm always impressed — not knowing much about our military heritage or the scope of our capabilities — at just the level of activity and what you actually find on these bases. When you get an opportunity to speak to the personnel, it's always very rewarding to hear their dedication to the job they are doing. I must say that it's somewhat disappointing to hear the frustrations they face on a day-to-day basis in trying, often, to do their job.

The member also commented on the contribution that these many personnel make to the communities in which they live while they are serving all Canadians. They are the folks who, because they have a dedication to service, also tend to get involved in the communities they're residing in. Whether that's coaching youth sports or getting involved in other activities, they are exemplary citizens.

It's really my honour to have an opportunity to speak briefly on the role they play. I thank again the member for Esquimalt-Metchosin for continually reminding us of the importance of these folks in our communities and the important work they're doing. Thank you.

A. Hamilton: I would like to thank my colleague from Okanagan-Vernon for his comments. In Esquimalt there are approximately 4,000 service personnel and 2,000 civilians who work on board ships or at the base. In addition to their professional contributions, a large proportion of the men and women who comprise the defence team also contribute as volunteers in the community, as a group and individually. CFB Esquimalt contributes approximately \$300,000 each year to the Victoria United Way campaign. Individually, they serve as coaches to youth sports leagues. They are members of service clubs and community committees. Their volunteer time, talent and treasure are important to the vitality of the all the communities of Esquimalt-Metchosin particularly and of greater Victoria generally.

[1045]

For all this contribution, Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that provincial laws do not give them an opportunity to vote in provincial or municipal elections when they are deployed away from home. Depending upon the time of departure, there may be a short envelope to participate via advanced polls. However, if they're deployed and gone, the province does not allow for mail-in ballots similar to the ones that the federal Elections Act does.

I would ask the Minister of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services to explore how we could fill a shortcoming that disenfranchises an important part of the community.

SMALL BUSINESS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

R. Lee: Small business has a very important role to play in rebuilding B.C.'s economy. The basic goal of every business is to make a profit. Successful businesses provide jobs and earnings for employees, providing a tax base for the cities and communities they operate in, and reinvest their profits into the province. Today I'd like to focus on small businesses and how they contribute to our province's economy and what we as a government can do to help make doing business in B.C. more attractive and more productive for them.

Small businesses can be defined in a number of ways, but the most commonly used definitions focus on the number of employees. The smallest self-employed businesses do not have paid employees, and often the owners work from home. One step up are microbusinesses. They employ five people or less. Then there are small businesses with 50 employees or less.

Small businesses contribute to the provincial economy in several ways, by creating and maintaining jobs, through production of goods and services, and by meeting payrolls that support families and stimulate further economic activity. The Premier's small business round tables, which were held around the province last summer, gave small business owners and entrepreneurs an opportunity to explain the barriers to expansion of their businesses and gave the Premier practical examples of where expansion can be achieved. As a government, that's what we want: small businesses that continue to grow and thrive.

Our province's economy is heavily dependent on resource extraction-based industries, but emerging sectors like high technology, tourism and value-added manufacturing are playing increasingly significant roles. These industries are considered by many to be the most likely engines of growth in the future and, since they are less reliant on capital-intensive resource extraction, are well suited for small business. In fact, in the high-technology sector small businesses already comprise 93 percent of employers. Innovation drives growth in this sector, and these services can often be performed efficiently from homes. Small business can be located in small offices and small plants in our communities.

Small businesses are our province's biggest job creators. They actually are the backbone of our economy. Nowhere have small businesses shown greater success for growth than in the technology sector. The Premier's Technology Council, appointed in the government's first 90 days, is showing positive leadership, and will continue to help make British Columbia one of the world's top ten technology centres by 2006. The government has also opened the door for invest-

ment in sectors like aquaculture, mining and oil and gas.

Running a small business is a dream for many people, a labour of love that greatly rewards — and not always monetarily. We want to make those dreams possible. In 2001 there were approximately 930,900 people employed in small businesses in B.C. This represents 58 percent of all private sector jobs in the province. Out of the total of 344,500 businesses, almost 98 percent were small businesses. Microbusinesses represent roughly 83 percent of small business. Self-employed people operate 54 percent of all businesses in the province. Among all provinces in Canada, B.C. ranked first in terms of the highest proportion of gross domestic product attributed to small business, coming in at 28 percent.

[1050]

More statistics, Mr. Speaker. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business outlook survey 2002 found that family incomes of self-employed are generally lower than family incomes of paid employees. They also work longer hours. Over 80 percent of small business owners reported never working less than 50 hours a week, compared to only 14 percent of paid employees.

In my constituency of Burnaby North, there are many opportunities for small business. The Burnaby Board of Trade has a mission to make Burnaby a vibrant place to live, work and invest in. It encourages, supports and promotes the growth of an active business community by facilitating economic development and creating a positive climate for business.

The Burnaby Board of Trade recently recognized a local business association in my constituency with a business excellence award. The Heights Merchants Association received the community spirit award for exceptional contribution to community spirit, image and identity. The association, which is a non-profit organization, promotes community-based economic development and creatively plans, manages and develops the Heights as a unique and vibrant urban main street of Burnaby. They carry out a wide range of activities to meet these goals. I congratulate them for their effort in supporting small business.

The majority of small businesses in Burnaby North are located along Hastings Street and the Lougheed Highway. Many of my constituents like to do shopping in the neighbourhood of the Heights area, where many successful small businesses are located. From big household fixtures at Norburn Lighting, Casa Bella Interiors and Burnaby Vacuum Superstore to fresh supplies in Regent Fish, Red Apple and Purrfect Flowers and Tings, the choices are limitless. The Valley Bakery is a good example of a successful small business that has grown. You can see the work that has gone into making the bakery a successful company, from the attention to quality control to customer services and community relations. Many factors come into play. Now you can even design your own cake and put in your order through the bakery's website.

Another area contributing to Burnaby's economy is Brentwood Town Centre.

Deputy Speaker: Member, your time has expired.

R. Lee: Thank you.

Hon. K. Falcon: It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Burnaby North, because the member has raised an important issue for all the small business folks that work hard across this province trying to improve their communities and the well-being of our society.

I want to just emphasize to the House how very important small business and the entire business community are to everything that we're trying to do as a government. There's a very important reason. We as a government recognize that without a vibrant, profitable business community — and I dare say profitable, something that our members opposite will often criticize us for.... We need to have a profitable business community, because when we have a profitable business community, that means we can fund the important priorities of this government, which are our health care and education systems — both of which, of course, are facing strong fiscal pressures.

[1055]

I want to just touch on some of the things that we've done for the business community and the small business community in particular, because whether you're a small, family-owned business or a large corporation, doing business in British Columbia has just gotten a lot better. Whether it's the 25 percent across-the-board personal income tax we introduced on our first day of office, which will put more money into the hands of employees and businesses right across this province, that is certainly going to be a benefit. Whether it's the 17 tax relief measures we've introduced for the business community, which will save \$400 million a year, that will help the business community. Whether it's the elimination of almost a thousand fees and licences, which will save \$18 million for consumers and the business community, that is going to assist the community.

The elimination of the tax on machinery and equipment. I want to tell you specifically that in the oil and gas industry alone, this means that instead of drill rigs being raced across the border to Alberta and having all the work done in another jurisdiction, because we eliminated that tax on machinery and equipment, they now will be able to have the servicing work done here in British Columbia. That's already had a positive impact in the Peace.

We've reduced the province's domestic tax on jet fuel. We reduced the 7 percent tax on bunker fuel. People may ask: "Why is bunker fuel important?" Well, that's the fuel for our cruise ship industry boats. Just here in Victoria alone, we've seen 75 additional visits this year, partially as a result of that change. For each cruise ship that stops off in Victoria, that adds about a million dollars to the local economy, so it is very, very positive.

We've raised the threshold for the small business tax rate from \$200,000 to \$300,000 to make us competitive with Alberta. We dropped the corporate income tax rate from 16.5 percent to 13.5 percent, which puts us right in line with Alberta. We want to make sure that our business community is competitive with our other colleagues and provinces and countries around the world.

The other area where we've made a major effort, of course, is in deregulation. We recognize we've got to roll out the red carpet in British Columbia — not roll out the red tape, which is what the previous government liked to do. We've made a commitment to reduce unnecessary red tape and regulation by one-third within three years, while at the same time protecting those very important principles of public health, safety and the environment. We're well underway, and I'm pleased to report that as of the end of September of this year, we've had a net reduction of almost 17,000 regulations in the province.

Let me give you a few examples. I notice that the Minister of Sustainable Resources is here. Well, the Land and Water B.C. agency, which comes under his purview, has reduced the application process time by 50 percent for access to Crown tenures. That has a huge impact on making sure that British Columbians can get access to the land base of this province and create opportunity and employment.

The aquaculture and Crown land tenuring has now moved and revised the policy, so we've got a single-window approach, which makes it far easier for those seeking approvals to receive those approvals. In labour-sponsored funds, we've introduced competition to make sure we have money going out to businesses that are trying to grow and that we do so in a competitive manner, not in the monopolistic way the previous government preferred.

Let me just say that the member for Burnaby North has raised some very important issues, and I'm pleased with the record our government has demonstrated in responding to those issues. I want you to know this: our changes are working. Don't listen to the naysayers. You should know that in 2002, we have turned the corner, and we are starting to see growth in this province already. Retail sales in British Columbia increased at twice the national rate. Job creation in this province leads the country with 90,000 jobs. So it's working, and we are underway. I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond.

R. Lee: I would like to thank Minister Falcon for his comments. To mirror the minister regarding deregulation for small business, it's important to support the business community with government changes. We have a community responsibility to promote the local economy. Currently, there are motions about deregulation before the House, and those are being debated. I'd like to say I couldn't agree more with those motions.

[1100]

The opportunities for exports continue to present themselves in this sector. Trade missions will help establish international trade and boost our investments in

the international markets but also expose made-in B.C. products in those very same markets. Looking at B.C.'s trade records over the past 20 years, our international exports have become increasingly important. Exports of goods and services have grown. Despite the economic good news in these numbers, B.C.'s share of Canada's total exports has slipped. The meaning? This means that we have made gains in the trade department. But the rest of Canada has passed us.

Trade surpluses translate into dollars flowing into B.C., while trade shortages translate into a reduction in these dollars flowing into the province. Trade has a direct or indirect impact on our economy, our businesses and jobs.

I'm glad that the government is taking steps to improve the situation in small business. I believe that the government's new-era vision will continue to help businesses thrive. As we move forward with our vision, doors are opening. From local business gains to cutting needless red tape and aggressively going after new markets for our goods, this province is benefiting from our combined efforts.

The results of the measures we're taking will not be immediate. These are long-term measures. They will take many years, but they will have a tremendous positive impact in the years to come.

Hon. M. de Jong: I call committee stage debate on Bill M204, standing on the order paper in the name of the member for East Kootenay.

Committee of the Whole House

THE HUNTING AND FISHING HERITAGE ACT

The House in Committee of the Whole (Section B) on Bill M204; T. Christensen in the chair.

The committee met at 11:03 a.m.

Section 1 approved.

Preamble approved.

Title approved.

B. Bennett: I move the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 11:03 a.m.

The House resumed; J. Weisbeck in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

Bill M204, The Hunting and Fishing Heritage Act, reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed on division.

Motions on Notice

REGULATORY BURDEN ON B.C. BUSINESSES (continued)

Hon. M. de Jong: Pursuant to standing order 31(2), I request that Motion 5 standing on the order paper be allowed to stand and retain its precedence. Accordingly, I call continued debate on Motion 18, standing in the name of the member for Coquitlam-Maillardville.

[Be it resolved that this House supports reducing the regulatory burden on BC Business that impedes economic growth and job creation.]

[1105]

K. Stewart: When we closed off the other day, I was discussing what I felt was important with regards to regulation and how protection was the paramount issue that should require an issue to come forward when it requires regulation.

By protection, I'll just quickly go over what I'm talking about here. I'm talking about the safety of workers and how regulations are important to ensure worker safety, as we have with WCB. Regulations are important to ensure that our communities are safe environmentally. Regulations would apply to business and industry in that context. It is important for government to ensure that protection is there through regulation. It is also with regards to business and personal in the sense of protection by regulation for investment and other types of personal protection for investment — i.e., we have regulatory bodies that have regulations that are there to protect people from various types of financial scams or financial misdoings. There are regulatory bodies in there with regulations to do that.

In talking about why we have regulations, I think we should now look at some of the things that are regulated that don't necessarily need to be regulated, and those are issues where there's process. We have to, again, have regulations to ensure protection, but with regard to process, we shouldn't have regulations to dictate how things are done. It should be the outcome that we're concerned about. That outcome, again, I think, really comes down to the issue of the safety of society and the safety of our environment as a whole.

Some of the ways in which the outcomes are regulated are unnecessary. We have to ensure that the person doing an act that is somehow endangering or causing an unsafe action to take place for someone is regulated, but the means by which business is accomplished does not necessarily need to be regulated at every different step of the way. The marketplace can decide the most efficient and effective way of operating a business, and that should be outside of regulation. That should be left up to the marketplace; that should be left up to the organizations that are involved in the activity. Therefore, regulation should only occur when

safety is in jeopardy and they need an enforcement-type body to ensure that happens.

That's basically the issue I wanted to bring forward with regard to this, because there are many, many regulations that don't do that. They're there to speed a process through, they're a means to the end, and they don't necessarily need to be there. Again, the workplace, the marketplace and our own organizations that we're involved with in the community can decide what those steps are, and they do not need government to regulate.

In closing, I just want to say how much I support the fact that we can deregulate. We can take regulations that are on the table now and move them off to make the organizations managed in a more efficient and effective manner, and the outcomes are more positive for us because we do not have to go through unnecessary steps to accomplish a job. Again, safety is paramount. We do need regulations for that, but we do not need regulations for process when that aspect is not in jeopardy.

R. Hawes: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak in favour of this motion. I want to talk for a minute about the impacts that I can see some of the regulation we have in this province has had on business, on jobs, on wealth creation and on actually driving our province to the edge of bankruptcy. I know it's harsh to say that, but the facts are that we're very close. We are a have-not province now. We're receiving benefits from some of the have provinces in this country. That's a fact that as a British Columbian, I'm ashamed of, and I think every member of our government is ashamed of it. We're working with everything we can to bring us back to being a have province, where we share our wealth with those throughout this country who are less fortunate.

[1110]

For the last decade we've squandered our wealth in this province. We've squandered what I would call our birthright in this province. What's even more shameful is that we've attacked the wealth of our children and our grandchildren, and we're forcing upon them a debt that they are not going to be able to sustain. It's our duty to try to change that around and to change it around now.

Throughout this province we have the voices of the ghosts of that last government, which are screaming loudly to stop what we're doing, to go back to the old regime where the special interest groups received all of the benefits and those who work hard to try to get ahead and earn a profit get punished by having to support those who would see profit as the enemy.

The government can't be the employer for everyone. The government can't continue to write regulation that cripples industry throughout this province. I want to talk about a few things that perhaps people don't think of as regulation but really are and have crippled us.

The last government kowtowed to the environmental constituency of this province to such an extent

that our resource sectors were brought to their knees in many parts of this province. Logging in a park was completely wrong and is wrong, but when you are so blindly loyal to a policy or a regulation that you can't see the impacts when they're negative, you're really hurting people.

The pine beetle infestation started in Tweedsmuir Park. Had they gone to work, that last government, and contained that infestation then in Tweedsmuir Park — and the only way to do that is through logging — they could have controlled the pine beetle infestation that's now affecting this province's wealth. It is now completely out of control.

I see the Minister of Forests sitting there. He knows how devastating it is. The fast ferry fiasco is nothing compared to the cost of the pine beetle infestation. That is billions of dollars of lost revenue over time for our government, for our people. That was because of a blind allegiance to a policy and the absolute unwillingness of the last government to look at a sensible solution to a big problem. Now it's a problem that's out of control, and we're having great difficulty. Now prayer is probably the only real solution. Let's pray for extremely cold weather for two winters to kill this beetle infestation.

I look at WCB. Probably in my office.... Not probably, for sure in my office — and I know the other MLAs in this House have exactly the same experience — the biggest complaint that I get is about WCB problems. They are problems that spring, for the large part, through the regulatory regime that WCB had put together — over 35,000 regulations. Most of those regulations — well, frankly, almost all of them — no one ever read. In fact, I know if you speak to workers and employers.... I have done that and asked them, "Have you read the regulations?" and the answer in almost every single case is no.

One must ask, then, if the workers haven't read this huge volume of regulation and the employers haven't read this whole volume of regulation, how is it making the workplace safe? In fact, what it's used for is a sledgehammer for inspectors to go into businesses, seek violations in the very complex regulations and apply fines. It's a punitive sledgehammer being used against industry, which further cripples job creation and the advancement of wealth in this province.

[1115]

The Forest Practices Code is in the throes of change. The act has been passed, and starting early next spring, we're going to see a new Forest Practices Code in place. The old code cost forestry, in the summation of the former government itself, over a billion dollars just for the regulation — no benefit of any kind. A billion dollars in cost and thousands and thousands of jobs lost — and for what purpose? So that there could be an appeasement to an environmental community that clamoured for more regulation that didn't do anything — completely and totally wrong-headed thinking. I'm quite proud of the fact that we have now been able to put a forest practices code in place that replaces that illogical, wealth-crippling regime and will allow forest-

ers to go back to work and will allow forestry to again become the number one industry in this province, which it should have been all along.

What we have seen is the creation, in many places, of parks. There's nothing wrong with parks, but we see parks that were created and that killed industry. One of the examples I look at that really is probably, for me, the most obscene was up in the northern part of the province, in the Tatshenshini. The mining industry spent millions of dollars after being invited by the former government to come in to do research and development. They did a great deal of development work and found a vast mineral supply that could be mined at huge profit, the Windy Craggy mining project.

That mine was proven and ready to start going towards production when the former government decided they would turn that area into a park. Well, of course, again to appease that environmental community, "Parks aren't a place for mining," they said. On this hundreds of thousands of square kilometres, a four-and-a-half-square-kilometre block could not be set aside for this mine which would have created for this province approximately \$150 million a year that could have gone to sustaining health care or education or bringing our roads up to a proper standard after ten years of neglect by the former government and a multibillion-dollar tab now, in the old pay-me-now-or-pay-me-later scheme. The last government elected to go with the pay-me-later, which has huge, huge cost implications that weren't there before. That's all part of a regulatory way of thinking.

The contaminated-sites legislation in this province is a huge crippler. Any industry that wants to locate on vacant land has to prove that land was not formerly occupied by some kind of industrial use that may have created some contamination. I'm familiar with sites in my riding that may have been used for forestry or something many, many years ago and have sat vacant for decades. Now an examination has to take place that costs thousands and thousands of dollars sometimes for uses that are nothing more than, really, industrial storage and are quite benign and not dangerous to human health in any way. Because of the inane bureaucracy around that act, that kind of examination has to take place, and it is crippling in cost. I can think of areas where the municipality that I live in owns a piece of land that's now redundant, and they wish to sell that land. But the cost of doing the environmental investigation is really more than the land value, so no one will ever do the examination. The land will sit absolutely useless, doing nothing, unless the act is changed, unless sanity comes. Thankfully, in May of 2001 sanity did return to this province, and that kind of legislation is now being looked at and is going to get turfed, and common sense is going to return to the fore.

[1120]

We have regulation in this province around things like tires and batteries. When you go to buy a new set of tires, you have to pay a deposit for the old, supposedly to recycle your old tires. Does anyone really believe these tires are getting recycled? I don't think so.

We have to pay a fairly substantive deposit for batteries. The previous government had a regime around batteries and battery collection that was so insane, it was impossible to figure out. If the collector of batteries had more than.... I can't remember the number, but it was like 51 batteries. If he had 52 batteries on his truck, he wouldn't get paid for the recycling fee. The larger collectors of batteries decided to absolutely quit the industry. The hammermills that take batteries in were looking at leaving the industry — total disgrace.

When you spoke to those who were trying to administer or who had created this bureaucratic nightmare, they couldn't understand what the problem was. Secure in their offices as they looked through the paperwork and examined the fine detail that some of these service station owners had to fill out, they would look for faults and ways to penalize and financially cripple small service station owners.

Does anyone here really think that the guy who owns the gas station down on the corner can't wait to get at his paperwork each day to document the history of the battery that he took in, in trade? That's what they were forced to do. Where the battery was originally purchased and the whole history of the battery had to be documented by the gas station owner — just ridiculous. They're not going to do that kind of silly thing. Now, maybe there's a purpose for it, but when you move out into the real world, this is the kind of stuff that isn't going to happen.

I used to be a banker, and I banked many small businesses, very small businesses. A lot of these people don't have a huge amount of sophistication around keeping financial records. Very frequently, the books are brought up to date on a Sunday night when they're watching TV after the kids have gone to bed. It's a chore that they have to do, because they're forced to do it by, among other things, their bank. These aren't people who want to sit down and document the history of batteries and such.

That kind of crippling, just crippling, bureaucratic regulation is a business killer. It's a killer of employment. As we moved through crippling all of the resource industries in this province, as we went through the last decade killing jobs left, right and centre and building an environmental regime in this province that those who are of that bent would call wonderful, we were creating tour guide operators at \$10 an hour while we took out jobs — mining jobs, for example — that averaged over \$70,000 a year, replacing them with jobs paying \$10 an hour.

Then to top it off, those from the other party, that sanctimonious group from the other party, like to stand up and rail about how we're taking dishwashing jobs and housekeeping jobs that are close to \$20 an hour now and replacing them in the private sector, admittedly, at rates less than that. But they have nothing to say about taking miners' jobs away, which were huge private sector jobs — the highest-paid jobs in this province — and replacing them with \$10-an-hour jobs. They have nothing to say about that in their quest to make everyone in this province a government employee.

I'm proud to stand up and support this motion, because every one of us in this government understands the crippling nature of overregulation. All of us also understand that there is a place for regulation. Where the place for regulation is, is to make sure that things move along sensibly and that they augment what we in this province want to happen. That's what regulation is supposed to do. Above all, it's supposed to make sure that those in the private sector or in government that want to do the wrong thing or cut corners can be brought to heel. Regulation should not be a jackboot put on the neck of the good, solid entrepreneurs in this province that first built this province and will build the future for our kids.

I'm proud to support the motion. I know all of my colleagues are going to, I'm sure, unanimously stand up and hail this motion as being the right way to go.

B. Lekstrom: I, too, rise in the House this morning to support Motion 18, a motion that supports the reduction of regulatory burden on our B.C. business that impacts their ability to provide jobs for our children and for the residents of this province.

It's quite interesting. When we talk about reducing regulatory burden, some people put a spin on it that it's going to mean less environmental action to look after our province. Nothing could be further from the truth.

[1125]

I think it's our job as government to create a positive investment climate in this province so that businesses will look at our province and want to invest their money. When they invest their money under a proper regulatory regime, they create jobs. When they create jobs, it allows us to provide for our families, and it allows us to generate revenue to deliver the services that we all need, such as health care and education, our social services and our transportation network. That's our job as government, regardless of political stripe. The job of government is to create an environment that people like to live in, that people like to do business in and that's friendly to all people who live here.

It's interesting that what we have to do is be competitive as well. We can't stand alone as a province. I live in Dawson Creek, Mr. Speaker, a very few minutes from the Alberta border. The oil and gas industry is a huge part of our economic business in our region. It contributes greatly to the provincial revenue, which allows us to deliver the services we all enjoy, but we've struggled for many years with an environment on the Alberta side of the border for the oil and gas industry that's much more friendly — not less environment-friendly, but more business-friendly to allow for the production and investment of our oil and gas industry.

I'm proud to be part of a government that has streamlined that regulatory burden on our oil and gas industry. The Minister of Energy and Mines has worked hard and has a good background in that industry and understands what the needs are, while at the same time making sure we look after the environment in which we all live. All the good things we do, if we

don't do them in a sensible and balanced manner that allows us to look after the environment, will be for naught. We have one world in which we live, and it's our job to protect that world while still creating an environment for investment.

Reducing regulation is not a bad thing. We hear that a lot: "My goodness, we're going to reduce the regulatory burden. It has to be bad. It has to be bad for the small person; it has to be bad for the environment." Again, I don't believe anything could be further from the truth.

Coming from a municipal background, it's interesting where, much like the regulatory burden that we place on businesses and residents of our province from a provincial mandate, we have bylaws in the municipal sector, many of which are never, never looked into. We had bylaws on the books in the city I represented as the mayor that were there but never acted upon. It made very, very little sense. Much like what we're doing, municipalities across this province are looking at what they supply for services, looking at bylaws they have that are valuable and not valuable and are making the changes needed to create a better environment for those municipalities. Likewise, what we're doing is making a greater environment for the people in British Columbia to live in.

It's interesting. I want to speak a bit on the oil and gas industry, as I've mentioned. I think we've made great strides to enhance that. The forest industry — again, an industry that was overregulated to the point that it stifled investment in our province. It didn't allow the people to bring their private investment money to not only upgrade existing facilities but to create new facilities in our forest industry. We're now seeing the revitalization of our forest industry in British Columbia because of our focus on trying to create a competitive environment — one that balances the environment with the requirements and needs of the forest companies and the workers.

The issue of talking about contaminated sites, as my colleague mentioned earlier. We have had some incredibly crazy regulations in that. Again, I'll refer to the area which I represent, which is Peace River South. When a gas station decides it has to move on or close down, small communities across this province as well as large communities — the lower mainland, Vancouver and Victoria — will see an empty site. The building's torn down, and we see a site that's had a fence put around it with no development to take place, because in many cases, for the ability to sell that, they have to reclaim a site.

We aren't talking about the issue of contamination leaching off site, because that has a valuable regulatory requirement that must be addressed right away. In the area where I live, which is incredible, we see half a dozen spots in a city our size — 12,000 people — that could be developed — prime locations. But because of the cost under the regulatory environment in which we live, it's far greater to reclaim those sites than the money which would be received if they sold it for re-development. We can address this. We can address it

through proper regulation, and we can enhance the ability for private enterprise to purchase that property, put new businesses on it and create more jobs while still looking after our environment.

[1130]

The issue of regulation — and hundreds of thousands of pieces of regulation are what we operate with in the province of British Columbia, many of which, as my colleague indicated earlier, have never been read by many of the people that deal with this, not because they don't want to read them, but because they're irrelevant in many cases. They're old pieces of regulation that haven't been updated. They're pieces of regulation that have, as society has developed, become almost extinct and unnecessary.

We will, in British Columbia, continue — and I say continue because we've begun down a trail of revitalizing the economic growth in our province — to reduce the regulatory burdens that we've placed on business and industry. We'll do it in an environmentally sound manner, because like all of us, I believe we're all environmentalists. It's the extreme element of any sector that I have problems with. I'm sure we'll have people out there saying that the downsizing of our regulatory burden in British Columbia is going to be a detriment to the environment. I'm raising a family like many other MLAs in this building, and just like all of the workers in British Columbia, I believe we have a heart and with that, we have the ability as legislators in this precinct to set regulatory requirements which bring the balance that's so needed to our province.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we need a province that has jobs. We need a province that will allow the people who want to go out there and work hard to make a living for their family the ability to do so. Right now we have stifled that over the past number of years. We're starting to turn that corner, and we're seeing the investment. The numbers across Canada — in British Columbia we've gone from last place to third place as the place to invest capital dollars in this country. That's a good-news sign and one that, if we continue down the trend we've set, we'll be number one in a very short period of time. I'm very, very certain of that.

I'm not going to speak long on this, but I want to reiterate. The idea of lowering the regulatory requirements and the burden that we've placed on industry and business in this province over the last number of years is vitally important to the well-being of our province. It's important to the industry, it's important to business, but most importantly, it's important to each and every British Columbian that lives here and loves to live here and wants to work here and retire and raise their family, because the direction we've set and what this motion reflects is a commitment to the people of British Columbia. I'm proud to support this motion.

M. Hunter: It's a pleasure to be speaking from a new perspective in the House this morning, although you still look the same to me.

I am pleased to rise to speak on Motion 18 put by the member for Coquitlam-Maillardville, but I have to

confess I was a little confused when I read the motion. I know that the author is bilingual, and I wondered about the construction of the sentence. I'm going to work on the assumption that the qualifying phrase "that impedes economic growth and job creation" is meant to refer to regulatory burden and not to B.C. businesses, because if it were the latter, obviously I'd take a different perspective on that. I translated from the member's French, and I figured that I'd got it right. Otherwise it sounds like an NDP motion, and we wouldn't want to be debating that.

To me, it's almost sad that we have to stand here and debate this motion today, because the issue of job creation, the role of small business as a substantial provider of new jobs in this province, ought to go without saying by anybody who lives and works in this part of Canada. I think it's true across the country that small business generates the vast proportion of jobs and incomes for Canadians. I know the last government didn't understand that fact in British Columbia, but the facts in our province are that some 350,000 small businesses exist out of a population of just over four million. That's a significant number of small businesses in a province our size. For the first time ever, they represent 98 percent of all businesses in British Columbia, and they employ something like 900,000 employees out of a total payroll, as we've heard in this House, of over two million workers now at work in British Columbia. Small business is very, very important, and everybody in this province needs to get that.

[1135]

I would also like to observe, on that same feature, that we keep hearing from the opposition about big business. We hear about Howe Street. You know, I can't stand here today and say that I really know of a big business that operates in British Columbia. In my former life I used to be accused of working for big business, and the big business in the seafood industry back then was B.C. Packers Ltd. B.C. Packers was a legend in British Columbia. It was a company formed in 1902. It did have a dominant position in the seafood industry in British Columbia, much the same as the former MacMillan Bloedel had in the forest sector.

B.C. Packers, at the end of its existence, was part of the Westin food empire managed out of Toronto. Westin's was the seventeenth-largest food conglomerate in North America. B.C. Packers was big business? I don't think so. I think we need to reflect on the fact that in British Columbia our big businesses are small businesses, our small businesses are even smaller, and we need to have a regulatory and economic framework that allows those businesses to be created and allows them to grow.

I know there are many members in this chamber, and I'm amongst them, who are graduates of the fraternity of what I call one-armed paperhangers. These are people who try to put a company together. They work with perhaps a friend who might have some legal knowledge or is actually a practising lawyer prepared to do a little pro bono work. You might have to pay a little bit of money. We've all been through that, or

many of us have, trying to understand what it takes to get a business up and running so that you can go out to clients and start to present invoices and the goods and services that you're qualified to do.

People who have been through that, whether they're in this chamber or not or elsewhere in British Columbia, know all about red tape and strangulation. They know and will tell you that as a general principle, the fewer the regulations and the less intrusive the regulations — other things being equal — the more and the faster the business grows. It's not really rocket science; it's common sense. We seem over the last ten years to have forgotten common sense, and we've gotten ourselves involved in a regulatory tangle that is going to take a lot of untangling.

The member for Peace River North alluded to the fact, as well, that it's not just British Columbia that gets in the way of business. We have three levels of government that we have to talk about. It seems to me that rarely, if ever, from a small business perspective, are those three levels of government acting in concert to encourage the kind of business entrepreneurship we need to encourage.

I don't know about you, but I'm a reader of the *National Post* as the outstanding journal of conservative thinking in this country. They had a very interesting series of articles in the newspaper this past weekend. One that stuck in my mind was the number of regulations you have to fulfil in order to walk a dog in public in the city of Ottawa. Now, it will come as not much of a surprise to many people that Ottawa would be the dog-walking regulatory capital of the country. It's that kind of examination of how regulatory nonsense not only governs business life in this country and in this province but also governs simple things that we take for granted on a day-to-day basis. These kinds of regulations aren't about whether you drive on the right or left; they're about whether Fido has a muzzle. We need to get away from that in our personal lives and in our business lives.

I would also though, at the same time, compliment the federal government. Not many years ago when you set up a business, you needed an income tax number. You needed a GST number. You needed I don't know what other numbers. At least now at the federal level, I will say there have been some helpful changes. Now you can go and register, and you get one number. That covers your federal registration. It's your GST number, your business registration. That to me represented a single change in federal regulation that was a very good example of how red tape can be cut and be cut in a helpful way.

[1140]

I think government regulations at all levels represent in a real way an attitude whose time is over. We've gone in our lifetimes, as people.... Most of us are of a similar age. Some of us are younger than others, but we've all had some experience and remember what life was like in days before government started to grow, when private capital, when families were encouraged to invest in the local grocer's shop or whatever it might

be. I know those times are gone, and I know we can't bring them back, but what we can bring back is the attitude that led to the creation of huge wealth in this country after the Second World War.

It was that encouragement and facilitation of private business and small business, expansion of communities, expansion of transportation facilities, intelligent investment in public infrastructure, keeping the public to the infrastructure side, education, transportation, out of the way of business.... Those halcyon days of the 1950s and 1960s, when I was not a part of the Canadian fabric but looked at it from afar.... Those are the features of the business landscape we need to recreate so that we can release once again the energy of private business in this country.

The days of expansion of the government's share of gross domestic product should be over. We need, as other members have said, to expand and encourage private investment. It's easy to say, but it's not quite so easy to do when you have this nest of tangled regulatory structures we have inherited. Again, as I say, this is a provincial problem, but it is also a problem at federal and local levels. I'll talk a little more about that in a moment.

I would observe that if we regulate business because we need to protect public interests and public values, I don't have a problem with that. I do think, though, that in the last 20 or 30 years, we have gone way overboard to the point where the public interest is actually impeding the expression of private interests and their ability to contribute to our society.

Now, we are making important changes. There's no question about that. I think we need only look at the announcements made this morning by the Minister of Energy and Mines with respect to our energy policy in British Columbia. Just one small example of what I think is an important change is an encouragement of the coalbed methane industry on Vancouver Island, among other locations in the province.

The freeing up of regulations that will encourage people to invest in an asset we have in this province, to me, is not rocket science. It's relatively simple, but by a stroke of the pen, we have said to the world we are competitive. We are interested in having private capital come here, because we understand that it's private capital that will create small business, will create larger businesses and will create jobs. That money will flow back through the economy.

We have a local example, which I have talked about in this House before, on the transportation front. Because of the approach taken by this government to the regulation of private business and the flexibility we have shown, we now are looking forward next March or early April to a private sector passenger-only ferry service running between downtown Vancouver and downtown Nanaimo. That ferry service is going to bring Nanaimo and its surrounding areas closer to Vancouver, in terms of commuting time, than is enjoyed by the constituents of the member for Langley or the member for Fort Langley–Aldergrove and other places in the lower Fraser Valley.

That private sector investment is going to make a huge difference to the way we conceive of our lives in the mid-part of Vancouver Island. I can't stress enough how important it's going to be. It's going to create a closeness, a proximity to the lower mainland that's going to make it easier for businesses. It's going to make it easier for people to commute, to buy real estate, to create businesses just like I did three years ago when I moved to Nanaimo from the lower mainland. Nanaimo was a place where I could access Vancouver fairly easily, although in the wintertime with airplanes it's difficult.

This new private investment is going to make a huge difference, and it is there because this government has encouraged that kind of business to locate and set themselves up and grow here. We've got lots to do. I listened carefully to what the member for Maple Ridge–Mission had to say, because he shares, I think, my views and the views of many people in this House as to where we are going and what needs to be done.

At the Workers Compensation Board, what a great idea — what a simple idea — to create a no-fault insurance scheme in the workplace, where workers gave up their right to sue their employers and the employers agreed they would fund a system so that when people are injured, they can be compensated and can be put back to work as quickly as possible.

[1145]

I have no problem with the concept. I have a problem with the system. I believe it's overregulated. I believe there is lots of duplication, and it is an area that I know the Minister of Skills Development and Labour is working hard to change. We need to do that, and we need to do it quickly. The cost of benefits, including WCB, is one of the competitive factors that we need to look at. As I say, I know the Minister of Skills Development and Labour is doing that.

The member for Maple Ridge–Mission also talked about another issue close to my heart: contaminated sites and environmental regulations. Almost ridiculous, I would say — ridiculous, never mind the adjective. The ridiculous extent to which we put people on contaminated sites is an absolute business burner. It doesn't make any sense to have sites, valuable real estate, behind fences because we don't have a regulatory environment that will allow the regreening of those facilities in a sensible way that allows business to proceed.

Many of us have been speaking a long time since we came here about streamside protection regulations, another thing we've inherited from the last government that has taken a huge amount of value out of private property in this province, including in my riding. I have examples where private homeowners living on a couple of hectares have a stream running through their property, and we have endorsed regulations passed by local government that means that essentially they can't develop a large percentage of those private properties. They can't even graze a goat. That kind of prescriptive approach to life, to me — doesn't matter what the results might be; you can't do it; it's an absolute — those

kinds of regulations.... If that's what this motion intends to address, then I am very pleased I am able to support it.

I stood in this House recently, and I complimented the regional district of Nanaimo. The regional district of Nanaimo has done some good work in terms of putting together a regulatory structure that encourages home-based business. They won a national award for that regulatory approach, and I compliment them again. But I can't compliment them for a lot of the other things they do that tend to be anti-business. It is extremely difficult in the entire regional district of Nanaimo, which stretches from Nanaimo airport all the way up to the boundaries of the member for Nanaimo-Parksville and across to the mountains, for anybody to locate any kind of industrial activity on land within the regional district of Nanaimo. The regional district of Nanaimo has gone out of its way to put businesses out of business in parts of my riding. I find that very difficult to accept. It's the result of past approaches. They are approaches we have to get by. I think people are beginning to understand that it takes more than government jobs to create wealth. Government jobs are a result of wealth creation by the private sector, not the other way around.

I think we have a huge issue to deal with, with respect to provincial sales taxes. I can tell you that the provincial sales tax is a huge web of complexity. Many businesses in my riding have had problems understanding why PST applies to a nail that goes into a particular article but doesn't apply when the nail goes into something else. It is a huge paper burden, and I intend to be talking to the Minister of Finance about that. That is, in my mind, a very important initiative that we could take to help businesses reduce their costs.

Investment choices, as other members have said, are more global in our time today than they have ever been. I assume there are places in the globe where investors who are of the kind that we are seeking to attract to British Columbia probably won't go. We say global. We really do mean, probably, the western hemisphere as we understand it. We're competing against jurisdictions in Europe, in North America, in east Asia and in the South Pacific. We need those investment dollars in British Columbia. We need investment dollars that have gone to Chile and Argentina back in our mining industry in B.C., as an example.

[1150]

We have to compete. It's almost trite for me to stand here and say that. As I said at the outset, it's a little bit sad that we have to be debating this kind of a motion, but we do, and we will, I'm sure, support it. The one-third reduction target that we have identified as a government as regulatory overburden, regulations that we need to get rid of, is important because it delivers a message. It's not just the regulations themselves that we are seeking to get rid of. It is the message that we understand as a government that it's private investment that creates small business and that small businesses flourish when they are not hamstrung by government watching everything they do. That mes-

sage we need to get across. The paper burden reduction is very, very important. We will, if we continue down the track we've set for ourselves, achieve what we want in this province, and that is a vibrant private investment climate that will bring people and investment dollars to British Columbia and will create our ability to maintain, sustain and grow the important public services that our people have identified to us.

I am pleased to support Motion 18.

Deputy Speaker: Closing debate on Motion 18, the member for Coquitlam-Maillardville.

R. Stewart: Today we've all come together on a motion that I believe caught everyone of one mind. There were no people to stand up and speak against this motion. It seems somewhat self-evident that what we ought to do in British Columbia is take the regulatory burden that affects business, work through it and work our way around the morass of regulations — the enormous number of regulations that affect business in British Columbia.

We heard from members across the province, and I want to thank those members who stood up and spoke for the businesses in their communities — the businesses that perhaps they used to own or run or work in — across this province that face regulations every day that, for some of them, don't make sense. For some of them, they are simply too expensive a burden to administer, to work around, to conform to and to understand in many cases. The costs of getting legal advice in order to fill out forms.... I've actually heard from businesses that said: "We had to hire a lawyer to fill out the form because every time we did it, the government felt we had done it wrong."

Clearly, the regulatory burden that faces British Columbia must be brought in line with those other provinces of Canada and those other jurisdictions around the world that welcome business, business investment and the job creation that business investment brings to their jurisdiction. We in British Columbia must do the same thing.

We heard about some of the regulations impacting contaminated sites. We heard about regulations impacting development. From my own background, every single day we saw a new regulation that would come up and surprise us in the way in which it attempted to slow the process down. This isn't a case where we're looking at regulations that always act in order to protect consumers, the public or the environment. These are in many cases regulations that have no purpose, it seems, other than to slow the process down and to make the process more expensive.

I think that while at the same time the members of this House will undoubtedly stand up in support of regulations that make sense — regulations that in a very simple way seek to protect the public from wrong, to protect the environment from harm — we have to stand up and say that those regulations ought to be simple, cost-effective and less of a burden on business investment. At the same time, they must be effective in

what they're trying to achieve without being too much of a burden on our society.

It is in that context that I thank the members who spoke in favour of this motion and thank the members who brought their own examples to bear on an issue I believe very strongly in — an issue I think we must move forward with, and I'm glad to see our government do so. On that, I thank the House, and I close debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. M. de Jong: Noting the hour, I move that the House do now adjourn for lunch.

Hon. M. de Jong moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

The House adjourned at 11:54 a.m.