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5TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT

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MONDAY, MAY 17, 2004

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

Prayers.

Private Members' Statements

THE IMPORTANCE OF AFFORDABLE AND ADEQUATE HOUSING

P. Wong: I rise in the House today to speak on an issue of great importance in every community in the province and to society at large. Homelessness is a serious problem that has a significant impact on everyone and poses risks to those who have to experience it. It is a problem not limited to the poor and drug addicts but, rather, affects individuals and families of all ages and backgrounds.

[1005]

Lack of adequate housing is often linked to poor nutrition and other factors that put people at risk for illness and disease. That in turn takes a huge toll on the medical system. The economy suffers because those that are homeless are generally not employed. When people do not work or do not have an income, they do not have any money to spend, for instance, on clothing and food.

By its very nature, we cannot ever know the exact number of homeless persons in the province, because they have no fixed address and are often a hidden population. However, we understand that there is a tremendous demand for affordable housing units, and the demand is still growing. In British Columbia, the province subsidizes 65,000 housing units; 42,400 are in the greater Vancouver area, and 24,500 are in the city of Vancouver itself. There are approximately 10,000 people on the waiting list for affordable housing.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights contains an article on homelessness called "The Right to Adequate Housing." This is defined as having adequate privacy, space, security, lighting, ventilation, basic infrastructure and location with regard to work and basic facilities.

One of the very real difficulties with affordable housing in Vancouver is the cost of property. While public-private partnerships for subsidized and affordable housing exist, developers are hard-pressed to build social housing when commercial or competitive residential properties reap a greater profit. Municipalities are able to operate based on revenues raised through property taxes, so there is a greater impetus for them to zone for commercial or private residential, which will yield higher taxes.

Vancouver is also in the midst of a housing boom. This has advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, construction and development are great for the economy. They create jobs and lead to more rental properties being available for those that do not own homes. More rental properties means more choice for renters, leading to lower rent in some cases.

Yet on the negative side, huge demand leads to higher prices, making it difficult for lower-income people and families to purchase their homes. Often they move into less expensive areas, often in the suburbs and much farther away from their work. Growth in suburban areas means that viable agricultural land and forests are being cleared for building. People also have greater needs for transportation, being farther from work, and often drive in single-occupant cars. This has a detrimental impact on the environment and on roads, which have to be maintained.

What can be done? We can learn from other governments and regions. For example, the government of Singapore has made low-cost housing a priority. In Singapore more than two-thirds of the people live in low-cost housing with a rent-to-purchase option. Every resident has a home of their own. Paying reasonable and affordable rent allows the people to spend other net income on education and other investments for their future. This will improve their quality of life.

Municipalities can help by reassessing zoning laws and making a commitment to the development of affordable housing. They also need to streamline land use, making it efficient and sustainable, and to build and invest in underpopulated areas. In some cases, this will be investment in rundown or neglected neighbourhoods.

Let me be clear. By investment, I mean true investment — not simply tearing down old buildings to make way for new and expensive condominiums. Development can be a mix of privately owned units, affordable low-cost units, shops, commercial enterprises and more. Neighbourhoods which are diverse in terms of culture and socioeconomic backgrounds are appealing to most and add a richness to society.

[1010]

Seniors are an important group that must not be overlooked when addressing the issues of homelessness and affordable housing. Many are on fixed incomes where high rents or mortgages are simply not feasible. Some have physical limitations and are socially isolated and need some form of support. It may be financial, physical or emotional. We need to invest in independent housing. Just because people are retired or do not work doesn't mean that they cannot take care of themselves. The province made a commitment to build a total of 6,000 such units for seniors to be completed in 2006. This is good news.

It is not enough to put a roof and four walls around a person. We have to build units that allow people to exercise their dignity. Private washrooms and cooking facilities should always be part of any development plans. Location near resources such as transportation, libraries, schools, hospitals, stores, parks and other amenities is critical so people can live where they work, where they play and where their friends and families are. A tent city in Vancouver is not a true choice. It does not meet the requirements of the UN right to adequate housing. It does not allow for privacy, space, security, basic infrastructure and amenities.

To conclude, I must say that we need to ensure that our residents will benefit when the economic tides have improved. I understand that in the rising tide, not all the ships will float. However, we as a government need to do as much as we can to help those unfortunate people when the economy is expected to improve in the coming years.

Hon. M. Coell: I want to thank the member for his comments. I share his concern about the need to develop affordable housing in British Columbia.

People who have special needs arising from their health, age or other circumstances often require support and assistance to meet their housing needs. I'm pleased to say that our government is committed to providing safe, secure, affordable housing for those British Columbians in greatest need.

Since taking office, we have increased funding for housing to over \$54 million. That is the largest provincial contribution to subsidized housing ever in British Columbia. These units provide safe, secure and affordable housing for British Columbians most in need: low-income families, seniors, people who are homeless and are at risk of homelessness and women fleeing from abusive relationships.

Since June 2001 the provincial government has committed funding for these projects and the construction of approximately 3,400 units under the provincial housing program. To date about 2,900 units have been completed, and 500 are in various stages of development. Once all these units are completed in the next two years, provincial subsidies will total approximately \$24.1 million annually. Part of this is our commitment to 100 social housing units at the Woodwards development in Vancouver, which will be an important step in revitalizing that city's downtown east side. For frail seniors and people with disabilities, the province is investing more in independent housing with support services and assisted living services than any other province.

Two years ago the provincial government announced a new housing-for-health initiative called Independent Living B.C. This program will help meet the needs of a steadily growing population of seniors who need some help with daily living but don't need around-the-clock care. The program is spearheaded by B.C. Housing in partnership with the local health authorities, the federal government, and private and not-for-profit sectors. By 2006 the program will provide 3,500 new independent housing units with supportive services for seniors and people with disabilities. To date more than half of these units have been allocated in communities throughout the province, and once all the units are completed, B.C. Housing will contribute \$17.2 million in annual operating subsidies to support these units.

[1015]

A third initiative I would like to mention is the community partnership initiative. The provincial government, through B.C. Housing, is working closely with municipalities, the private sector, non-profit socie-

ties and other groups to explore community partnership initiatives that help meet the housing needs of those most in need. To date, this has resulted in the creation of 529 housing units that were funded through one-time or time-limited grants without the need for ongoing operating subsidies.

The province is also taking steps to help local governments prepare to meet housing needs of an aging population. At the local government annual general meeting of Vancouver Island and coastal communities, the Premier announced \$2 million in funding for the UBCM to help develop innovative solutions and strategies for local government. Our government also works with municipalities to support them in meeting the needs of affordable housing in communities and for people of all ages by making them aware of bylaws, zoning and other tools that are available for them at the local government level.

In British Columbia the private sector provides 95 percent of all housing, so it is absolutely necessary that the economic conditions exist to allow for a vibrant, thriving housing industry. B.C. is enjoying a boom in housing construction. B.C. is number one in housing growth. B.C. saw a 21 percent jump in housing starts in 2003, the largest increase in Canada and one of only two provinces where starts are forecast to keep growing in 2004.

The provincial government has cut red tape and unnecessary regulations to allow the housing industry to thrive and provide British Columbians with housing that they can afford. Legislation has been introduced this session, designed to cut red tape for real estate agents and developers while increasing protection for homeowners. The provincial government is taking bold steps to ensure British Columbia has a strong housing and construction sector while ensuring that housing needs of the most vulnerable British Columbians are met.

P. Wong: We all agree that affordable housing should not be viewed simply as a benefit to lower-income people or families. Rather, it should be viewed as an investment in our society and our future. Ensuring people can make use of opportunities will bring a bright future for everyone. When people have a decent place to live that they can afford, society will benefit. As the world continues to urbanize, it is no longer an issue that can be ignored or can take a back seat to any other.

Affordable housing and homelessness ultimately impact every sector of our society and, as such, need our collective focus and effort. Homelessness and affordable housing is an issue that can affect any one of us at any time. It affects all communities in our province and throughout the country. It is not something the government can fix on its own simply by throwing money at the problem. It requires creative, passionate and empathetic ideas and solutions that are brought forward by society as a whole.

Solutions have to be devised that ensure those being helped can retain their dignity and build their self-

esteem. It needs to be real and broad, with an eye to the future and a long-term benefit to society. Dealing with this issue is the right thing to do, and now is the time to do this. British Columbia is the best place in the world to live, and we have the ability to ensure that it is for everyone, whether they rent or own. Together, let's move forward.

ALASKA HIGHWAY INTERNATIONAL FORUM

B. Lekstrom: Certainly, I'm very happy today to rise in this Legislature to speak on a piece of our history in British Columbia, North America and, really, around the world. Today I rise to speak on the Alaska Highway and what it means to our province, to our country and to our neighbours to the south, the Americans.

[1020]

Coming up in September, there is an international forum being hosted in Dawson Creek. The Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association is coordinating the Alaska Highway international forum on behalf of the city of Dawson Creek. The forum will be held in Dawson Creek on September 29, 2004. The mission is to create a forum for political leaders, administrative officials and tourism stakeholders from British Columbia, Alberta, the Yukon and Alaska to jointly explore and collaborate on issues relating to maintenance, infrastructure for tourism development, preservation of history, and marketing and promotion of the Alaska Highway corridor.

It is also planned that a memorandum of understanding will be signed by the political leaders at the forum that will help solidify a long-term working relationship between all parties interested in the future of the highway. Currently, a resource list and background are being prepared by the project coordinators.

In preparation for the upcoming forum, representatives from the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association and other invited elected officials will accompany city of Dawson Creek Mayor Wayne Dahlen on the Alaska Highway Legacy Tour. The legacy tour will take place between July 1 and 11 of this year. The tour will start at Dawson Creek and end at Fairbanks, Alaska. The trip will provide a chance to meet fellow politicians and representatives interested in the long-term preservation of this important international land link. The trip will also provide an opportunity to learn more about concerns, issues and visions in relation to the highway itself.

The last time there was a major collaborative effort to promote the highway was in preparation for the fiftieth anniversary of the Alaska Highway back in 1992. Of interest, the Alaska Highway was designated a national historic event of Canada at Contact Creek in Soldier Summit, Yukon, in 1954. In addition, the highway was designated the sixteenth international historic civil engineering landmark on September 29, 1996, at a ceremony in Dawson Creek. It is estimated that ap-

proximately 250,000 to 300,000 visitors travel the Alaska Highway annually.

At this time I want to congratulate the city of Dawson Creek for taking the initiative to organize this important event and urge those ministries that have been contacted by the coordinating team to support and attend the forum.

This highway is about a great many things. It's about the history we share with our neighbours to the south. Built back in 1942 over eight gruelling months, the highway goes from Dawson Creek, which is mile zero of the world-famous Alaska Highway, and ends about 88 to 90 miles south of Fairbanks for a total of about 1,500 miles. Building this road in eight months with the American military, we had Canadian personnel and local residents of the day working on this highway. It is quite amazing, for those of you that have travelled to the north, to see the conditions. Building roads today is a challenge, let alone back in 1942.

I want to congratulate everyone who is working on this international forum to bring and highlight what this highway means not just to British Columbia, not just to the Peace country, but to the world. It is a land link that transports goods from Alaska and the north through British Columbia to the rest of Canada and to the lower states. It is something that I think for a long time we took for granted. This was built as a wartime measure back in 1942 during times that weren't so good in the world.

The highway is used for tourism; it is used for industry; it is used by the people that live and work in the area. To think that a highway of this nature could be built in the conditions — whether it be through the muskeg, through the mud, through the mosquitoes that we sometimes are known for up there and flies that do happen on occasion.... The workers, many people, gave their lives building this road, and it was built with safety in mind — safety to protect the citizens of our great country and our neighbours to the south.

Probably most importantly, I want people to know that when you look at it, it's an adventure to travel the Alaska Highway. The condition of that highway is in great shape. It isn't a dirt road anymore. It actually is a road that I think would compare with many others we travel. It does go through great areas of wilderness, and it is a beautiful drive, so if people have the opportunity to ever take the chance of a holiday of a lifetime, drive the Alaska Highway and see what it has to offer. Take your time and stop at the small communities on the way, starting in Dawson Creek. Traditionally, most people end up in Fairbanks, Alaska, about a 1,500-mile drive from Dawson Creek.

[1025]

Our trucking industry relies heavily on the Alaska Highway, and in partnership with the federal government we look after that highway. British Columbia to a degree looks after the first portion of it, and then the federal government kicks in after that.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great privilege that I have the opportunity today to stand here to promote the

international forum being hosted by the city of Dawson Creek to enhance what this highway means not just to British Columbia but, as I indicated earlier, to the world. I thank you for giving me this time this morning.

J. Reid: Indeed, this is a very worthwhile initiative, and I'd also like to add my support to the initiative and the city of Dawson Creek for undertaking this. When we see the cooperation that goes into this highway — we have an international situation; both Canada and the U.S. share it — and then we look at the different provinces as well as the state that's involved....

This initiative is to pull together people from British Columbia, from the Yukon and from Alaska, as well as from Alberta, to take a look at shared concerns and opportunities that can exist. This kind of coming together in cooperation also allows for innovation and new ideas to be generated and to be supported. Whenever we see people who get on the same page with the same vision, then the outcomes are far more likely to occur as well as a lot more energy being devoted into being able to see that fruition from those dreams.

This conference is going to cover a number of important topics. It's going to talk about tourism promotion, as the member for Peace River South was expressing, of this very historic highway. I can say from first-hand experience, though I haven't travelled the entire thing, that the vistas are incredible and the experience is a very, very worthwhile and very enriching one. There are many opportunities along the highway for different experiences, including hiking and stops at different parks as well as the delightful towns along the way.

Other than tourism promotion, it's going to also talk about improved services for travellers. The 1,500 miles of this highway do mean that there are long times where you might not see very many other travellers, especially during certain times of the year. They are going to be talking about maintenance, the long-term vision, as well as investigating future opportunities with rail.

I'd like to suggest to the member as he attends this that he might want to add another item to that agenda list, and that is the issues of safety. I know the member himself is very interested in safety, particularly as a motorcycle enthusiast with safety on motorcycles. I know this is a very popular route for motorcycle travellers, and I can understand why.

There are many different ways of explaining safety to people and demonstrating that. Perhaps one of them is showing people what not to do. I actually personally don't recommend that one. I think it's much better to set a proper example — for example, in things like proper clothing or headgear. Particularly travelling that route for those long periods of time, people need to come prepared, knowing what they're going to be in for.

I encourage all parties to participate in this event, to celebrate this historic highway and to promote the tourism. I congratulate the member for Peace River

South and Dawson Creek for hosting and promoting this.

B. Lekstrom: I would like to thank my colleague from Nanaimo-Parksville for the response to my member's statement this morning. You've touched on some interesting issues. I know that through your visits up there, you are aware of what we face.

You brought up an interesting point: the issue of tourism. We often think about it as motor homes or trucks and trailers going up, but motorcycles are prevalent going up the highway now — not so much a few short years ago. But now that the highway's in great shape, people are travelling that highway more and more.

When we talk about the highway.... You touched on something else, and that is: make sure you come prepared. Whether you come in early spring or late fall, there is the chance that you might see a beautiful snow shower every so often, depending. We've had them, I think, virtually every month of the year. It's not something that comes and stays through the summer months, but again, it just enhances, I think, the wilderness experience that people are after.

[1030]

This event that the city of Dawson Creek is hosting and that is being coordinated by the Northern Rockies Alaska Highway Tourism Association is going to highlight what can be done and accomplished on the highway, whether it be for trade, for industry or for tourism. What are the needs of the highway? Where do we go in the future? What are the needs along the highway? Is it rest stops? Is it truck pull-offs? Is it safety issues? There are great amounts of distance in many cases between communities, for instance. You can drive many, many hours through wilderness, through some of the most beautiful land on earth, without seeing any communities along the way.

It's great to be from an area that has so much pride. When you can talk about a piece of our history in British Columbia and in North America that's recognized around the world, it's a wonderful thing. You can talk about Dawson Creek, and the first thing that many people say is: "Oh, that's mile zero of the Alaska Highway." Many people south of the border, actually, refer to the Alaska Highway as the Alcan — the great Alcan highway.

Again, we have many tourists that come from the United States of America who will spend some time talking with the local people in Dawson Creek as mile zero about whether their grandfather had worked on that road while it was being built, talking about their experience and that they're coming back to visit part of their history. Many of them are bringing their grandchildren to see what their great-grandfather or grandmother had worked on and completed and was so proud to be part of.

In closing, I'm just going to thank the city of Dawson Creek for hosting this conference and encourage all of my colleagues, if time permits, to attend if they can. Again, it's on September 29 of this year in Dawson

Creek. It's going to be a wonderful forum. It's going to highlight many aspects of the Alaska Highway and plan for the future, and that's what it's all about. Thank you for your time.

CHALLENGING THE PATH OF VIOLENCE

P. Sahota: It seems that every time we turn on our television set, there is yet another news story about a gang-style, gang-related shooting. Most of the time it is tragic because it usually ends in the death of another young life. What is even more disturbing is the fact that more often the suspects.... The victims are usually South Asian, they're usually males, and they're usually known to the police. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that there's a collective sigh within the community when the news story or the police officer does not mention the word Indo-Canadian.

If you looked at the crime statistics dating back a decade ago, you would see that B.C. averaged three South Asian homicide victims per year. Tragically, that number has climbed, with terrible consequences. Since 1998 B.C.'s South Asian murder victim rate has stood at an average of ten per year. This is astounding, especially when many of the murders remain unresolved. I know from talking to many people in my own community that people are now beginning to lose confidence and faith that anything can be done to solve this very complicated issue.

There has been much talk in the media. The South Asian community is finally discussing the issue openly. The community leaders and the temple leaders are trying to figure out ways to address the issue. Police enforcement agencies are beginning to address it seriously. Public forums have been held; community forums have been held. Prominent people like Justice Wally Oppal have made their views known on this very important issue — when he said that the Indo-Canadian community has produced a disproportionate number of killers. At times blunt statements need to be made so we can begin to look at the roots of the problem. Some say growth in the drug trade is to blame. Others say the problem has to do with the accessibility of guns. Some lay blame at the family structure.

Recently a controversial federally funded report was released, called *South Asian-Based Group Crime in British Columbia (1993-2003)*. This report attempted to look at the root cause of gang violence. It makes a number of references to how a clash between South Asian and western cultures may be leading young men from this community into a lifestyle of drugs, guns and crime. It says there is "a consistent pattern where Indo-Canadian criminals are from families who provided their sons with money, freedom, favouritism and a discipline inconsistent with their sisters, coupled with the culture's distrust of the police and an emphasis on preserving face or honour."

Anybody who has spent any time in this community or has a cursory understanding of the community knows that females and males have been treated differently for a very long time, and although this is chang-

ing — which is good news — this has been part of the Indian culture for a very long time. But I believe what's more telling is the part when the report says: "Add B.C.'s explosion of lucrative criminal opportunities in the illicit drug-smuggling trade, and a violent mixture is created."

[1035]

When I talk to young people or to local police, they tell me there are young people out there who want the easy street. They're not willing to work hard, and the lucrative drug trade offers them the easy way. The Organized Crime Agency of B.C. says there is also a notable distinction between so-called organized crime syndicates and Indo-Canadian criminals involved in group violence. The agency also says Indo-Canadian groups lack the sophistication and structure of Asian gangs or the Hell's Angels, and they are prone to extreme violence that most organized crime groups would view as being bad for business. However, this report is warning that this lack of sophistication could change. It says it has the potential to evolve into a major criminal enterprise in the next five years.

Studies like this help us understand some of the aspects of this very complicated problem. They don't take into account all the variables. But I do know from talking to many concerned citizens that they believe the so-called drug turf war is on the rise, and they want the violence to stop. Some would argue that when the drug pushers who prey on the vulnerable people in our society become victims themselves, they are simply getting what they deserve. I'm not sure that I take that position, as I think that justice is best served and delivered in the courts rather than on the streets.

There is also concern that it is only a matter of time before more innocent bystanders pay the ultimate price for the misdeeds of others in their community. We know of innocent young people who entered the cross-fire only to pay the ultimate price. The fact is that many people don't feel safe when they walk down the street. With the emerging trend of grow-rip home invasions, I'm hearing concerns from homeowners who are afraid after hearing stories about drug gangs who have mistakenly targeted their homes as a place to steal drugs and growing equipment.

I also know that the member for Surrey-Green Timbers shares many of these concerns about this disturbing trend of drugs and violence within the South Asian community, and I was wondering if she would be able to elaborate on some of her thoughts on this situation.

B. Locke: I would like to thank the member for Burnaby-Edmonds for giving me the opportunity to address the issues of crime and gang violence.

Crime and gang violence is a topic that is as familiar to the constituents from my riding of Surrey-Green Timbers as it is to the constituents in Burnaby-Edmonds and everywhere in the lower mainland. Communities are growing more and more fearful of the impact of crime in their once-peaceful neighbourhoods.

The member for Burnaby-Edmonds talked about the federally funded report that targets young South Asian males and the increase in the drug and violent crime in that community. The report points to their parents as part of the reason for the increase in crime. Similarly, a report done by the drug crime task force in Surrey also indicated that parenting in the South Asian community was a significant factor to the increase in drug crime in the South Asian communities.

I find those comments disturbing and irresponsible. While we certainly should not ignore the problem and hide behind the wall of political correctness, parents — especially new-immigrant parents — do not need finger-pointing. They need our support. We should also remember that these youth are Canadian-raised in our communities and schools. We all share a responsibility. As a matter of fact, the globalization of several aspects of our communities, like business travel and the environment concerns, also play a role.

This past Friday I attended an event called UNITED — Unified Network of Indo-Canadians for Togetherness through Education and Discussion. That's quite a handle. The VPD and the RCMP also attended. I met young, positive South Asian youth who are trying to make a difference. These are positive role models for kids in our community.

Some modern organized crime groups operate like sophisticated corporations, strategically pooling resources for common criminal purposes with the sole goal of financial profit. The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, through the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia, provides various enforcement initiatives through joint forces operations with local, national and international police agencies as well as the private corporate sector.

[1040]

These criminals are hard to detect. Their crimes can include commercial break-ins, frauds, armed robberies, murders, drug importation — heroin — and drug exportation — marijuana. They are mobile, they diversify, and they are borderless. Marijuana-growing operations are acting as the main revenue source for organized crime in B.C. The member for Vancouver-Kingsway invited me to join him with the Vancouver police Grow Busters team on two grow-op busts. That was quite an education for me.

It is believed that motorcycle gangs and other organized crime groups now control 60 to 75 percent of the marijuana production and smuggling in B.C. Police conservatively estimate there are about 8,000 pot-growing operations currently existing in the lower mainland. Astoundingly, this produces in excess of \$2.2 billion each year. Without a doubt, these organized crime groups are using marijuana production profits to finance other criminal enterprises.

This government's commitment to address the issues of crime, both at a neighbourhood and at a global level, is evident in several recent initiatives to make B.C. a safer place to live. One of the most ambitious initiatives, the lower mainland district integration initiative, is integrating municipal police officers to create

regional teams. Today police are undertaking cross-jurisdictional investigations and international crisis situations as the complexity of organized crime proliferates. Developing an organization that is designed to take on modern criminals, crime agencies and gangs is critical. The LMM police forces, the RCMP and the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia are cooperating to achieve this goal of safer homes and safer communities.

Another example of the integration model is the integrated municipal-provincial auto crime team, IMPACT, which targets organized car thieves. Certainly, this is necessary for my growing city of Surrey. Most importantly, through the integration model, police agencies can continue to prevent crime by actively targeting problem areas in different communities. Last year the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General announced it would further integrate police services by implementing PRIME, the police records information management team. PRIME is a powerful weapon in the fight against crime, allowing police to process information more effectively and more time for front-line work in the community.

While the issues of gangs and organized crime are common to constituents from many lower mainland ridings, police are strategically approaching the issue with all their resources focused.

P. Sahota: I would like to thank my colleague from Surrey-Green Timbers for her response. As she said, it would be highly unfair to paint the entire community in an unflattering manner, especially when we're only talking about a very few misguided individuals who have turned to such socially damaging lifestyles. I think it is important for the public to realize that when we talk about South Asian crime, we're talking about a very small segment of the population. What's clear is that solving this problem is going to require many different sources of support and understanding.

As I said, the community is beginning to respond. Organizations like VIRSA and United are stepping up to the challenge. The police forces are devoting more resources. No matter what culture we come from, it's crucial that as parents we work with our kids and become actively involved in their lives — talk with them and listen to them. Talk to them about their futures and some of the obstacles they see in their way. Help them plan to overcome these obstacles and move ahead in life.

Our kids need support and guidance in our schools too. Parents can take part in PACs and many other volunteer activities. Teachers can provide great mentorship to their kids, and they can share an important perspective with parents about their children's development. I think it is clear that from the government's perspective, as my colleague has outlined, the government has responded to some of these issues with PRIME and with some integrated homicide teams that have been formed. I'm also looking forward to the debate on the proceeds-of-crime legislation. I have spoken to my colleague from Surrey-Newton earlier today,

who is also going to speak on this issue about combating gang violence. I look forward to his remarks.

But there is also much we can do as a community by taking an interest in our young people and providing them with the proper guidance they need to make positive lifestyle choices. They say it takes a village to raise a child, and I couldn't agree more. I strongly encourage parents and community leaders across B.C. to extend a hand of friendship to our youth and to make positive community connections to stop crime before it starts.

[1045]

NORTH SHORE WOMEN'S CONSULTATION FORUM

R. Sultan: Before I begin on my chosen topic, let me commend the member for Burnaby-Edmonds for a very brave statement. I think all of us commend her for drawing the House's attention to this extremely important issue facing all of us.

Several weeks ago 65 women of the constituency of West Vancouver-Capilano met in a consultation forum to define and communicate issues which should be a priority to this MLA — that is, to me — as he endeavours to influence future government policies and programs. Invitees to this women's forum ranged from homemaker to a school board chair, from police officer to a Squamish nation elder, from several small business persons to a real estate broker from both North and West Vancouver. Jean Ferguson, a West Vancouver municipal councillor, moderated the forum. Table by table debated, and I listened.

The benefits of the forum, as reported by attendees, were diverse. Networking, a contact list and resource information were mentioned by a large number of women. Others enjoyed the participation of high school students. These students who attended were, in turn, inspired — they reported — by the power, dedication and contributions of the other attendees.

The diversity of this group of outstanding women seemed to offer everyone an increased awareness of issues and common concerns and the need to work together to improve the quality of life in all areas of the North Shore. There were comments from opposing points of view such as, "Thank you for listening to women as a voice," in comparison with: "This event should have included women and men." Many issues and priorities were identified, but let's just consider the top ten. In my own conceit, I knew in advance exactly what they were going to be: health care and education. I was wrong — dead wrong, male wrong.

The number one issue identified by these North Shore women was affordable housing. The forum said that North Shore residents must be educated to understand that lower-cost housing should be welcomed in neighbourhoods. Densification of neighbourhoods is necessary, they said, since the North Shore has an extraordinarily high incidence of real estate tax deferral among seniors. They pointed to this as evidence of the reality that many North Shore seniors, particu-

larly senior women living on fixed incomes, can't really afford to stay put in this rapidly escalating real estate environment, but neither can they afford to move out, nor do they want to. In sum, affordable housing was the forum's most important issue by far.

The second most important issue was lack of women in leadership positions. Forum participants wondered if there should be a quota system operating for women in politics, such as occurs in some European countries.

The third most important issue was what they described — and I emphasize, they described — as lack of admission spaces in universities and colleges. Formidably high entrance requirements were a concern. They observed that competition for places is growing as the economic value of university and college education is increasingly recognized.

The fourth most important issue was the social support network — the need for greater attention to crisis centres, family counselling services, safe houses and youth support groups.

The fifth most important issue was seniors care and the need for seniors caregivers to receive social and financial support. Problems here included the isolation of seniors, transportation, prescription drug abuse and physical abuse.

The sixth most important issue forum members identified was honesty and integrity in politics and government.

The seventh most important issue was law and order. These women felt that offenders should be prosecuted more quickly and that penalties should be more stringently enforced. They perceived judges as often soft on crime and especially soft on repeat offenders.

The eighth most important issue was waiting lists in the hospitals. These women felt there's a need to update the health system.

[1050]

The ninth most important issue was arts funding. Hmm, I didn't expect that one. It was pointed out that arts funding in B.C. receives 39 cents per capita from the province. In Quebec the comparable figure is \$1.40.

The tenth and final in our top-ten list of most important issues was social and financial support for single mothers.

These were the top ten taken directly from the forum report — their own report. Close runners-up were: eleventh, school bullying and drugs; twelfth, substance abuse and the need to raise drug and alcohol awareness and to fund counselling and treatment; and thirteenth, the need for women to support women.

Are these simply issues of the North Shore, or do they cut across the entire province? In order to provide a perhaps different perspective, I invited my colleague — an MLA, chair of the women's caucus, former mayor, former nurse, former doctor's spouse, Brit by background, a community leader in her own right as well as my gossip partner in caucus. I'm delighted to turn the podium over to the member for Alberni-Qualicum.

G. Trumper: I would thank the member for West Vancouver-Capilano. It's always a delight to listen to him on whatever subject he speaks on, and I do want to commend him for having held this workshop for women and for his opportunity to sit and listen to their concerns.

Rather than answer some of the questions on the ten top priorities from his particular riding, I do want to talk about a couple of things. We at the women's caucus went to Prince George at the end of April and had a meeting with about 80 women from all walks of life. We did a very similar project. We had round tables. We sat and listened to their concerns. It's interesting to note that many of their concerns are the same as the ones from West Vancouver-Capilano.

Also, the member for Delta South held a round table a couple of months ago. Whereas she really thought the top issue of their concerns would be the Delta Hospital, it probably came halfway. Most of their concerns were very similar: affordable housing, the social support network, law and order, health care and the waiting lists, and the support for single mothers.

I just want to tell you that I will be holding a round-table discussion in my riding, which is a very diverse riding, in the coming month. I'm quite sure, without prejudging, that we will see the same things surfacing from that group of women, because we do seem, as women, to address or have issues that are more important to us than maybe the nuts and bolts of the economy — whether the highway is going to be black-topped or whether there's another industry coming into the community. Those things are all very important, but I believe women look at those social issues which are so important as they bring up their families, as they are members of the workforce and as they strive to balance budgets in their own homes.

I do want to talk about a couple of issues. One is the lack of women in leadership positions. I just want to tell you that in my community, we have had various women in top positions. Leslie Wright is the president of the local BCTF association. Dianne St. Jacques is the mayor of Ucluelet. Donna Brett was a longtime councillor and works very hard on the community aspect of Port Alberni, and certainly in Qualicum we've had many women in leadership positions.

[1055]

It is true that we are 52 percent of the population in British Columbia, and we probably are not represented in that percentage in positions of leadership. I do believe, though, that we do, as women, need to be able to address the issues which are important to us and the issues which the member for West Vancouver-Capilano has brought to our attention. They are incredibly important issues. We must, as women, do what we can to push those particular items forward so that they become front and centre and that whatever the governments in British Columbia and Canada are, they understand those issues which are so important to the women in this country and in this province.

With this government we are and have been addressing some of those issues. I know that all of us

struggle with the issue of as we get older. Particularly in my area, in Qualicum, we have a high number of the age group that is ever-increasing — the highest number of people who are over 90 — and it is growing. The waiting lists for hospitals are growing. We also need to be putting a lot more into preventative health care and helping.

The support for single mothers. Today they do have a choice of what type of care they need for their children, but we certainly need to do more. We have more single moms who are supporting their families for all sorts of reasons. They are trying and are doing a great job. We do need to make sure we are supporting them.

The issues are very complex, and there are no easy answers, but I certainly will support the member for West Vancouver-Capilano in the work he is doing and that I will be doing to continue with this work.

R. Sultan: Thank you, member for Alberni-Qualicum. To sum up, the North Shore women's forum was a grand success. Virtually all participants rated it a 4 or 5 on a scale of 1 to 5. As a first attempt, we anticipated time would be short, and many people did say that the allowed two and a half hours was inadequate.

Again, one of the most impressive aspects emerging from this group of women was the unselfish attitude — the concern for the community and the well-being of everyone. Nearly every woman would be interested in a follow-up forum as well. I'm committed to follow through and report to them on at least the top ten issues.

It does force an MLA to do some soul-searching, however. For example, how does one go about influencing the government agenda on everything from the lack of women in leadership positions down to arts funding, not to mention school bullying, substance abuse and the need for women to support women? Of course, some of these are more susceptible to government influence than others.

I am struck by the prominence of what I would call the social agenda and the submergence of what might be called the economic agenda. Not once did anybody mention tax cuts — astonishing. Also, I'm struck by the fact that many of the items are primarily values-driven, not primarily money- and resources-driven. I refer to the issues of women in leadership, honesty and integrity, law and order, women supporting women, and support for the arts.

Other issues are more clearly resource-constrained, including affordable housing, university admissions, the social support network, hospital waiting lists, and so on. While much progress has been made in many of these areas, we are dependent on the health of the economy and, in the end, the availability of funding resources.

Even here it's interesting to see the paucity of black-top and highways and the prominence of social concerns. I confess that for this archetypical economy-oriented male, it is a wake-up call.

With the assistance of my five women advisers and co-workers — Jean, Patty, Terry, Susan and Nancy —

and others, I have prepared a draft personal action plan to push the top ten issues further. I will be sending this soon to all forum participants for their reaction — a sort of report card for future action and accountability.

Would I be compared unfavourably with another male politician if I simply concluded with the phrase: "Watch me"?

Mr. Speaker: That concludes members' statements.

Hon. G. Plant: I re-call introduction of bills, with leave.

Leave granted.

[1100]

Introduction and First Reading of Bills

ANTI-GANG ACT

T. Bhullar presented a bill intituled Anti-Gang Act.

T. Bhullar: I move the bill be introduced and now read for a first time.

Motion approved.

T. Bhullar: Approximately a decade or so ago this province, mainly the lower mainland, began to experience what we believed was primarily a problem confined to large American cities. That is the proliferation of gangs and problems associated with gangland activities. Nowadays one can hardly turn on the news on a Saturday or Sunday without it being reported that there has been another gangland slaying.

Gang activity in the lower mainland has reached epidemic proportions wherein gangs are involved in activities such as trafficking in narcotics, extortion and gun-running, to mention only a few of their activities. Reportedly, a drug debt of a few thousand dollars will result in a shooting. It is incumbent upon this institution to take action to preserve the lives of our young people. Some of those involved in this activity are in their late teens or early twenties.

Not only must we protect our youth, but there are other victims, such as the young woman who lost her life last summer in an attempt to break up a fight in Gastown in Vancouver. The other victims are the families of those who have been killed in gang-related activities. Last Friday I received a call from a father who said he was cremating his son in the morning. On Wednesday last I received a telephone call from a distraught mother who said that her home had been shot up and that they were going to kill her family — and as her MLA, what was I going to do about it?

I bring forward a bill which is draconian. However, I do so with the purpose of stimulating debate in both this institution and amongst the public. The gang activ-

ity, I would submit, has surpassed simply relying on our men and women in uniform to combat it by themselves.

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

Bill M204 introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

STRATA PROPERTY RESIDENTS' DISPUTE RESOLUTION ACT

T. Bhullar presented a bill intituled Strata Property Residents' Dispute Resolution Act.

T. Bhullar: I move that the bill be introduced and now read for a first time.

Motion approved.

T. Bhullar: It is imperative that the scales of justice be balanced at all times in any legal dispute. As a young lawyer practising law, I was often approached by individuals who owned strata and faced a conflict with their strata council. Without getting into a long speech, these individuals did not have the means to obtain legal representation due to their inability to retain a lawyer because of the costs involved. In each of the cases I dealt with, the strata owner, out of frustration, relocated. These amendments are designed to ensure equality and force parties to work out their differences without one party having a greater advantage over the other.

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

Bill M205 introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. P. Bell: I call private members' Motion 3.

Mr. Speaker: Pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 3 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

Motions on Notice

PROMOTION OF CANADIAN BEEF *(continued)*

W. Cobb: I call final debate on Motion 3 standing in my name on the order paper. This motion is important in our efforts to open up the borders to all Canadian beef products and for the B.C. cattle industry.

[1105]

As stated in the headlines today, "Drought Leaves B.C. Ranchers High and Dry." This industry is facing serious water problems, as well as the much-needed moisture for the production of forage for the cattle industry.... It's becoming more and more crucial that we advise and inform the public around the world that Canadian beef is in fact safe.

I ask the motion be passed now.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Motion approved.

Hon. P. Bell: I call private members' Motion 83.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 83 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

ROLE OF TEAM SPORTS
IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT
(continued)

B. Locke: I call final debate on Motion 83 standing in my name: "Be it resolved that this House recognize the positive impacts of team sports on children in developing self-esteem and in teaching life-long healthy habits."

In closing, I was pleased to bring to this House a reminder of the value that both adults and children must learn to succeed in today's world, and that's teamwork. Teamwork teaches children how to develop healthy relationships with others that will last them for all of their lives — in business, in play and in family relationships.

With that, I ask that the motion be passed now.

Motion approved.

Hon. P. Bell: I call private members' Motion 115.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 115 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

MINING INDUSTRY IN B.C.

R. Sultan: I move:

[Be it resolved that this House recognizes the benefits of a thriving mining industry and supports ongoing efforts by government to make British Columbia competitive on a global basis in this industry.]

If I may speak in support of this motion, as I understand it, 10 percent of the caucus wants to get up and talk about this motion. I can't think of a more graphic illustration of the support that the mining industry has within this government than the fact that a long queue behind me wants to get up and talk about it. I'm not going to talk for very long. You've heard me many times before talk about the excitement, the economic merit and the importance of the mining industry to this province.

Let me just say that mining is back. We need it in a modern society, and there is no more illustration of that physical reality than the fact that here we have the great republic of China — if I've got that terminology correct — growing at a reported annual rate in the last quarter of almost 10 percent. Here we have a one billion population society that is going gangbusters and sucking in resources from everyone, including British Columbia — very good basic conditions for our mining industry.

Secondly, we need this industry to help pay for our health care, education and other services. In recognition of this, this government has appointed for the very first time a Minister of State for Mining to make sure that nothing is overlooked as we attempt to facilitate the re-expansion of this vital industry. I would hope that members would support this motion.

Hon. P. Bell: It gives me great pleasure to speak today in support of this motion. This week is Mining Week in B.C. It's a very exciting week for me. It will be a busy week as I travel around the province.

[1110]

I want to speak to members for a few minutes about the importance of the mining industry, but I also want to talk about the fact that the mining industry is really five industries. It is not simply one industry, as I have discovered. Mining can be broken down into five different components. The first industry, and one that many members do not think of as being part of the mining industry, is that of the aggregate industry and industrial minerals. Aggregate, in particular, is a huge industry in the province, employing over 3,000 individuals. It is a very, very critical industry. Everything we do in construction revolves around aggregate in some way, shape or form. Whether it be the concrete forms for our houses, the highways we drive on and the asphalt they are built of or anything to do with any large structural components, oftentimes it revolves back to aggregate.

Aggregate has been a very, very complex problem because as we all know, you need aggregate to grow and prosper, but very few people like the idea of a gravel pit or a quarry in their back yard and the associated trucks that are involved with that particular project. It is important that we are strategic in where we locate aggregate facilities.

I'm pleased to be able to tell you that we have a new pilot program starting up for aggregate, chaired by the member from Mission. The project will involve the Fraser Valley regional district. We will be working

with the Aggregate Producers Association to develop a new proposal that we think we can move forward in, and the Union of B.C. Municipalities is quite excited about that proposal.

But there is another actual component to the industry as well, over and above aggregate. That is industrial minerals. There is actually quite a thriving industry in B.C. growing in the industrial mineral segment. One of the more interesting ones that I will be speaking a bit about later on is actually that of graphite. Who would think of graphite as being a product that we produce in B.C.? Yet we have some of the highest-quality graphite anywhere in the world. In fact, General Motors is using the graphite we produce here in B.C. for its experimental work with Ballard Technologies in fuel cell technology. Likely, as we move into the twenty-first century and start developing more technology around fuel cells, we will see that B.C. will be a leader in the production of the mineral graphite that is associated directly with fuel cell technology. There are many other different forms of industrial minerals produced in the province. Certainly, we all know about jade, a high-quality product that B.C. is renowned for, but there are many other forms of industrial minerals, and it is quite a thriving sector.

The first sector I referred to was the aggregate and industrial sector. The second industry within mining is what we all think of as being the mining industry — what we call hard-rock mining. That is actually either the underground or open-pit mines we often think of that produce copper, gold, silver and molybdenum, zinc and all of the various other minerals that are associated with British Columbia. British Columbia is mineral-rich, one of the wealthiest jurisdictions anywhere in the world for mineralization, so we have an opportunity that we need to capitalize on. Certainly, the hard-rock sector is one of the key sectors that we believe we can grow.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in 1990 there were 30 operating mines in British Columbia. Some of them were coal, but many of them were hard-rock mines. Between 1990 and 2001, 18 of those mines closed. We went from 30 operating mines down to 12 operating mines. We had in 1990 over 16,000 direct employees in that particular component of the mining sector. Today.... I should say in 2001, because we have started to grow again. In 2001 that number dropped from 16,000 down to 7,800 employees.

Spinoff jobs in the mining sector are one of the highest percentage of spinoff jobs of any sector. Some estimates range as high as 5.8 jobs for service sector jobs for every job created in the mining sector. So that loss of 8,000 jobs during the 1990s translated into over 50,000 jobs in rural British Columbia. Those jobs were in communities like Smithers, Terrace, Nelson, Creston, Kamloops and Prince George — all over, in fact, British Columbia. Tumbler Ridge was virtually devastated during that period of time.

[1115]

The second key industry is that of hard rock. The third key industry is actually perhaps a subdivision of the second key industry, hard rock. I see that as the

exploration industry, because it really is an industry unto itself. It's an industry that is critical. Certainly, the hard-rock industry depends on the exploration industry for its growth, but it is key and individual in nature.

I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that coming from the logging sector, it is refreshing to be working in the mining sector, because there is such incredible optimism, particularly from the exploration community. Having gone through what they went through in the 1990s — just a devastating period of time where they were literally told they were not welcome in the province — they have come back, and they have come back in a huge way.

There are, this year, a large number of exploration projects around the province. I see the member for Kamloops–North Thompson sitting in the House. In his community there is a company that has raised over \$24 million for a single exploration project, a mine that could employ 300 to 400 employees in his community. Spin that off again by five or six times — a huge number of jobs.

The B.C. and Yukon Chamber of Mines is very, very optimistic. Mining exploration dropped to about \$25 million in the late 1990s. This year we're anticipating something in the range of \$90 million to \$120 million, and that number just keeps growing every day. It is a very, very exciting period of time. There could easily be 3,000 people employed in the exploration sector this summer. I know in speaking with my colleague from Bulkley Valley–Stikine that the Smithers hotels are already booking up, helicopters are hard to find, and drill rigs for the minesites are getting very, very difficult to find.

Exploration is the third key component of the industry. The fourth one is coal. Coal has huge opportunities in British Columbia. In Alberta they produce 75 percent of the electricity in the province via coal-fired electrical generation. We do not yet have a single coal-fired electrical generation facility in the province, although we are working hard to try and make one happen. The coal sector is a huge sector for my colleague from East Kootenay. It is an important sector for the member for Peace River South as well, so it is something we look forward to growing.

The fifth sector in mining is that of placer. Placer is a long-forgotten industry. It is the industry that really founded B.C. It was the industry that grew B.C., which originally drove people into the placer areas down in the Kootenays, into Barkerville and up near Atlin. It continues to be an industry where there is much opportunity, and I'm working aggressively with that industry to make that one grow.

Mining is very exciting in British Columbia. It's a great place to be right now. There is a commodity boom that many of us believe will be the biggest commodity boom that has ever occurred in the world. It could easily exceed the commodity boom that followed the Second World War. It is a great place to be; it's an exciting place to be. I look forward to the comments of the other members in the House today about how they see the industry moving forward.

K. Krueger: It's a hard act to follow the Minister of State for Mining, because the Premier of this province certainly walks his talk. He had told the mining industry that we are tremendously interested in seeing them revive and seeing them once again regain their position of prominence in the economy of British Columbia. It used to be the number two industry in B.C. It has a lot of thriving industries to compete with getting back to that statistic, but it's on its way up, and the Minister of State for Mining is a champion they could only have dreamed of in the past.

In the nineties I served five years in opposition. Gary Livingstone of the Mining Association of B.C. used to take us on tours to show us how mining had changed over the decades, how many of the fears of preservationists were groundless, what a small footprint mining actually leaves on the landscape in British Columbia in contemporary practices and how careful they are about remediating sites.

We went on a tour of the Highland Valley Copper site, for example, near Logan Lake. It was almost as if they had tied up the wildlife and let it loose just to show itself off to us when we arrived, because there were moose and bears and coyotes. It's of course a site where no shooting is allowed, but they've been carefully reclaiming the land as they finish with it, and the wildlife and the fish in the ponds attest to the expertise of the scientists that they employ to do that.

[1120]

I really want to commend the Minister of State for Mining for the enthusiastic job he has been doing since his appointment. He is known everywhere. He was recently in Kamloops, and it's very encouraging for people in the industry — after all those years of trying to get government interested in allowing mining again, let alone encouraging it — to have such an enthusiastic proponent.

Highland Valley Copper, near Logan Lake, still employs nearly 900 people even though it's been in something of a wind-down phase for some time. It is the major employer in our area. The employees average close to \$90,000 per year. Sometimes the United Steelworkers don't like it when we use that statistic, because their members don't want everyone thinking that that's what they each make. Of course they don't; it's a rough average.

The United Steelworkers and Highland Valley Copper together are both exemplary corporate citizens in our area. They are huge donors, between them, to the United Way fund every year in Kamloops. They're able to do those things because they make a very, very decent living at the mine. It's hard work and it's dirty work for a lot of them, but they're good at it, and they're really good for the economy.

There are a tremendous number of spinoff jobs in Kamloops and our whole region. In fact, when we looked at a shutdown of Highland Valley Copper during the NDP years because they just weren't making any money with the price of hydro and the low price of copper at the time, we crunched the numbers and real-

ized what a shock that would be to the regional economy. We were absolutely in dread of it happening.

There's been a huge turnaround, of course, since then with the increase in copper prices and the commodity boom that the minister was speaking of. It's great to see, because we value those jobs, and we certainly value the spinoff jobs and the spinoff benefits to everybody in the region.

The Afton pit, which was considered in the past to have been mined out, has given rise to a huge amount of positive interest recently. That was the project the minister just referred to, which has raised some \$24 million recently to continue exploration. The proponents believe — and it looks like they're right — that the best of the ore is still under the pit and in a rich vein of ore leading off toward the city of Kamloops. There's the potential — the likelihood, it seems — of an underground mine there that could once again generate riches for our area out of the old Afton pit. We're thrilled about that.

I used to have the exploration people come and see me when I was in opposition. They would talk about how discouraging it was that they would sit at the land and resource management planning tables, and as soon as they identified an area as an area of interest for mining exploration, at the very next meeting of the LRMP they would find preservationist types at the table urging that that same area be designated for protected status for one dreamt-up reason or another. It was tremendously discouraging to them. It meant the loss of a lot of their investment in exploration. Eventually exploration pretty much dried up compared to what it had been.

Once again, due to the efforts of the Premier and the Minister of Energy and Mines and now the Minister of State for Mining, exploration is tremendously revved up. We're going to town again in this province and very glad of it.

I believe that the mining industry is already a world leader out of British Columbia. Of course, British Columbia is such a stable, solid place to be, where — thank the Lord — we don't have to worry about miners being kidnapped or mines having to be guarded by security guards against guerrilla activity, as happens in the some of the South American countries that were successfully competing against us for new sites.

This is a tremendous political jurisdiction for the mining industry to operate in. The one thing that mitigated against that was the unfriendliness to the industry itself by government in the nineties. Well, that's over. Those days are bygone. We've got a government and a minister and a Premier and certainly a caucus who are very much in favour of the new environmentally sensitive and friendly mining industry that has developed and demonstrated its expertise in British Columbia.

I wanted to rise to support this motion on behalf of my many constituents who are employed in the mining industry and all the rest of us, all of whom benefit from the mining industry in B.C.

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

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

Hon. G. Plant: Thanks to my colleagues for the indulgence. We are being joined in the gallery by 29 bright grade 5 students from Tomekichi Homma School in Richmond-Steveston, which in addition to its many other wonderful attributes happens to be the school that my daughter went to.

[1125]

It's great to see people from Tomekichi Homma here. They're here today with their teacher Don Allison and three parents: Mrs. Jensen, Ms. Kwong and Mr. Sears. I know that the House will make all of these fine people very welcome.

Debate Continued

V. Roddick: "Be it resolved that this House recognizes the benefits of a thriving mining industry and supports ongoing efforts by government to make British Columbia competitive on a global basis in this industry." This is extremely important, as my colleague from West Vancouver-Capilano said earlier today.

We had a women's forum in Delta South, in Ladner, in Tsawwassen area and in Prince George. What came out on top? Families — support for families that's required. There was a mental health two weeks ago in my riding.... The same thing: how do we support the families? I was at a police open house this weekend. What was the theme there? Stress pressure, services required for families. How do we help this? How do we pay? We manage.

The other day in this Legislature I spoke on Bill 50 about parks and wildlife. Humans are part of that chain. We have to be able to cohabit and pay as we go — not to mortgage our souls, not to mortgage our grandchildren's souls. We have to be able to produce food. We still have to eat to live. We also have to be able to earn the capacity to pay for the food and services we desire. One such area is mining.

Our *New Era* document: "Adapt a scientifically based, principled approach to environmental management that ensures sustainability, accountability and responsibility." We need a commonsense approach, not a David Anderson approach to the oil and gas moratorium. He obviously buys into the belief put forward by a Dr. Timothy O'Riordan of Norwich, England, that countries don't have to stand on their own two feet or pay for themselves and their services. They should break into small communes that are in tune with the living universe. This is nothing but muddle-headed communism at best. Communism, for heaven's sake, has been totally discredited as a modern, successful form of government.

We are moving forward. Mining provides family-supporting jobs with an average salary of over \$80,000. Opening new mines doesn't just mean jobs either. It means we can hire more nurses, reduce waiting lists, and invest in education and transportation.

Last spring at the Bayshore the biggest mining show that we have seen in ages was held. They could hardly fit it in. As a woman, it was interesting because it was a sea of men, so I was attracted, obviously, to the one or two women in the place. I went over and introduced myself to what turned out to be a woman geologist, and I said: "What do you think of what's going on?" She said: "It's fabulous. It is so different in the last two years. I can't tell you how incredible it is. We are moving forward. I've got some work to do."

[1130]

Recently in Toronto there was one that actually attracted 9,000 people. That is an amazing complement to what we can do here in B.C. We have eliminated the corporate capital tax, have eliminated the PST on machinery and equipment, and have the highest exploration tax credit in Canada. We as the general public win when mines open.

I've just had a signal from my colleague. I'm only halfway through my rant of the morning, but I think you've got the picture. B.C. has a rich mining tradition, thanks to the quote from our new Minister of State for Mines.... We need to move forward on this. It is something that our province is part and parcel of developing. Looking ahead, we can see some mine operations being reactivated, coming out of care and maintenance, and being put back into production.

D. Hayer: Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of Motion 115, which recognizes the benefit of a thriving mining industry today. I know we only have about two minutes because so many of my colleagues want to speak on this motion.

While most people consider mining to be an industry in a remote location seeking out the most precious and base metals, there is one aspect of mining that is very important to my riding of Surrey-Tynehead and to the lower mainland as a whole. As you are aware, home construction and development are at an unprecedented high in Surrey and across the lower mainland. This industry creates many, many well-paying jobs that contribute significantly to the economy of this province. Those jobs and that vibrant construction industry would not be happening if it were not for a competitive mining industry, because all the residential and commercial developments we are seeing right now are dependent on one thing: gravel. Most of that gravel is mined right here in the lower mainland. There's a huge demand for aggregate to supply the concrete industry, the asphalt industry and the roadbeds for home construction, hospitals and so on.

Many jobs, both in the actual mining of this gravel and in trucking to haul it to the development sites and concrete plants, are totally dependent on mining. In addition, there are jobs created in the extraction of gravel for sale to our neighbours to the south, the Americans. In fact, on a regular basis there are gravel barges being tugged down the Fraser River through my constituency to supply the Washington State industry.

All these jobs mean work for my constituents and for constituents of my fellow MLAs throughout the lower mainland. Mining is a key to our future prosperity, and I am pleased that this government is making a great effort to ensure that our mining industry is not only competitive in the global market but that the industry is returned to being one of this province's principal job creators, the way it used to be. The ore that is mined to make gold, copper, silver, zinc and lead is in demand throughout the world, and I am very encouraged by our government's desire to see British Columbia play a major role in meeting that global demand.

The jobs created by all forms of mining — from the metal ore to limestone, gravel to coal — provide the revenue government requires to ensure there is a social safety net that protects us all. It contributes to one of the best education systems in the world and supports the health care system we all rely on. Therefore, it is with pride and with the encouragement of my constituents that I support this motion.

D. MacKay: Representing Bulkley Valley–Stikine, it does me a great deal of pride to stand up here and support the motion we're debating in this House today. Bulkley Valley–Stikine represents probably one quarter of the province in the northwest. Some of the richest mining activity we have in the province is up in that part of the riding.

We heard the minister of state talk about the exodus of mining people from the province over the last number of years. We saw one out of every two jobs associated with the mining industry leave the province of British Columbia and go elsewhere.

[1135]

Mining is, in fact, a very mobile industry. I've been fortunate enough over the last couple of months to have travelled up to Juneau and Anchorage, Alaska. I have spent some time with state Senators up there and the Governor of the state of Alaska talking about the mining industry. I know where all the miners went when they left British Columbia. They went up to the state of Alaska, because all the mining industry that's taking place in Alaska is in fact being done by Canadian miners. We lost a great deal of expertise to people outside British Columbia and outside Canada. I'm certainly pleased to see so much of the mining industry back in our province.

British Columbia has certainly been blessed with a great deal of mineralization, and that is really evident in the riding that I happen to represent. We've seen the commodity prices increase dramatically because of China's growth spurt that is taking place. The commodity prices are at their peak right now, and it is incumbent upon this government that we make mining attractive once again to the mining industry — to bring them back here to create those well-paying jobs for the families that rely on jobs to enjoy some of the finer things in life that the mining industry will bring to people who were employed in that industry.

Because I do travel through the north part of the province quite a bit and talk to the mining industry

people, I want you to know that when I speak to the mining industry, they all tell me without exception how pleased they are to be back in the province. They're happy to be back in the province where there is a stable government and a government that supports the mining industry. We support the mining industry — with reservations, of course. We're not going to destroy the environment. The mining industry understands that, and they're willing to live with the conditions that have been imposed on the mining industry by successive governments and by our government. But they're certainly pleased to be back in the province.

What have we done to create opportunities for the mining industry? We've done lots. Can we do more? You bet we can. We talk to the mining industry all the time to listen to what more we can do to make mining attractive in this province and at the same time protect the environment. I'm certainly pleased to stand up here and support Motion 115, and I look forward to hearing what other members have to say on this motion.

B. Bennett: I wouldn't be able to return home to the East Kootenay if I didn't come into the House and speak to this motion, Motion 115, in support of mining in British Columbia. For many, many years the East Kootenay produced between 50 and 60 percent of the mining activity in the province. We're now hovering somewhere around 50 percent. We dropped a little bit when we lost the great Sullivan mine out of Kimberley that operated for over a hundred years and pumped \$20 billion into the B.C. economy.

I'm happy to report that exploration has doubled in the East Kootenay over the past couple of years. We hope to see it tripled this year. We definitely would like a new mine in the East Kootenay. But really, from my perspective, we need to find some new mines somewhere in British Columbia, and in a way it doesn't matter whose constituency or what region those mines are found in. We just need to find them.

Some people in our society worry about mining. They think that mining makes a mess and that it's not sustainable. What I would say to that is that society has to make choices about how they're going to use the natural benefits and natural resources we have at our disposal. With mining — for example, with coalmining in the East Kootenay — we essentially take the tops off some of those mountains to get at that coal. Those mountains are put back together by the coalmining companies through a very strict reclamation process that sees lots of wildlife on the mountainsides after. It is true; those areas are never the same. But that's a choice that society makes to get the wealth out of the ground that we can then use for health care and education, put the land back as best we can after and do it in a way that doesn't pollute the streams, rivers and lakes.

I support that kind of choice, and I think this government supports that kind of wise and responsible choice. I think we should continue to recognize that mining is actually one of the few industries in the province that provides huge benefits to the public purse, from which we have the funds to pay for all the things

that everyone wants. In terms of the actual overall impact that mining has in the province in terms of the land use, I understand that if you took all the parking lots at shopping malls and added them together, you would have more land impacted than you do from the actual mining industry in B.C. For a very, very minuscule impact on the land we have huge benefits that come out of this industry. That's why I have decided to speak in favour today.

[1140]

D. Jarvis: I also stand up to support this motion on the benefits of mining in British Columbia. Most of it has been said already, but I think we have to say that mining was probably the first industry in British Columbia.

Back in the late 1600s the Spanish sailed up the west coast of North America. They missed Vancouver Island, and they bumped into — I guess, knowing the Spanish — a couple of Haida war canoes. The record shows that they were actually trading for gold with the Haida. Obviously, there was a gold mine in the Queen Charlotte Islands back in the late 1600s.

Today mining is probably the main influence of this province outside of forestry. It has been the mainstay of our growth in this province, especially in our rural communities. Mining has sustained hundreds of small and large communities, even before British Columbia came into Confederation. All of these many years until today there have been ups and downs in the mining industry. But it has sustained itself, and it has also sustained this province.

My great-great-grandfather came here in the 1830s looking for gold as well. My family has a long history of it, and although I come from an urban riding, I still feel that mining is of great benefit to this province. We have had exploration over the years. We have had marvellous places to go, like Barkerville. In 1858 it was the largest town north of San Francisco.

We have had great mining areas such as the Highland Valley. Highland Valley actually consumes a million dollars a day in electricity and produces.... It's been going for — I don't know how many — almost 25 years now and is still going strong. The Sullivan mine, which went for almost 100 years, has now closed. There were times when the revenue out of the Sullivan mine actually exceeded the entire budget of the British Columbia government.

Mining has been a benefit to this province, and it has been a benefit to the people in this province. I support this motion.

Deputy Speaker: Seeing no speakers, the question is Motion 115.

Division has been called. Members, pursuant to standing orders, division will be at 8:30 this evening.

Hon. P. Bell: I call private members' Motion 46.

Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed

with Motion 46 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

WORKING LAND BASE

(continued)

W. Cobb: Motion 46 asks us to recognize the economic and environmental importance of the working land base and the need to adopt a balanced approach in its land use. As we travelled around with the land use task force, we heard many times that balance was the key. In many cases, there were strong feelings that there was not balance, but that it was a process of who could last the longest and who had the money to pay the participants to stay at the table.

A lucrative protectionist movement does not allow for balance. As was said to me many, many times when we were going through the Cariboo-Chilcotin land use plan, these people did not have the will or the mandate to look at balance. They were there on a positional basis, not on an interest base, and could not deviate from that position no matter what. That does not give us balance, economically or environmentally.

[1145]

I would like to include some comments from an article written by Patrick Moore called "Eco-Imperialism and the Anti-Aquaculture Movement." These comments reflect much of what happened ten years ago when we were going through the land use plan and are still part of the attitude today. I'm going to cut it down in the interest of time, but I would like to get them on record. The headline is "Eco-Imperialism and Anti-Aquaculture Movement."

"Eco-imperialism is not limited to developing countries in this topic. It is alive and well right here in Canada in the form of a campaign against salmon farming and other types of aquaculture. Anti-aquaculture activists have for a long time portrayed themselves as the underdogs fighting the good fight. This is the David-and-Goliath myth that they constructed for themselves, and it's nothing short of an absolute lie.

"Like the imperialists of old, the new eco-imperialists have delusions of grandeur. They don't seek consensus; they seek conquest. Let there be no mistake. In the last year we have witnessed nothing less than an unprecedented, fully funded and highly coordinated campaign to rob B.C. coastal communities and first nations of a prosperous and sustainable future. It's a campaign of fearmongering based on exaggeration and misinformation, and it's one that must be stopped.

"The grass-roots struggle against eco-imperialism must continue. Nothing short of the future of the coastal communities and the first nations depends on it."

Those are the comments by Patrick Moore.

We also heard, as we travelled around, that many of the areas that are set aside for specific purposes are not managed for those purposes. As things change, we lose the attributes of those ecosystems. As time goes on, we have more and more demand on the land base for other uses and need to ensure not only that the ten-

ure holders are protected but also that the wildlife is taken care of. Again, we need balance.

We tend to manage and find the balance on the lands that have tenure, but we fail to manage or work on the balance of the protected areas or parklands. In many cases, the only way to protect the ecosystem is through management and balance. This is apparent in many of our parks that we have set aside and left to nature. In some cases this could be great, but in the case of the beetle infestation it is totally unsatisfactory, in my mind. What good is a huge park if it's full of dead trees?

Because of not managing and finding the balance, we now have a situation that not only affects the immediate economics of the area but that could have serious downturns in the future not only for agriculture and the forest industry but for the tourism industry as well. We promote and advertise the beauty and abundance of our parks. As I said, who would want to visit an area with nothing but a bunch of dead trees?

I support this motion for balance and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

K. Krueger: Like the speaker before me, I certainly support this motion. I think it's important that the motion sets out that the House recognizes both the economic and the environmental importance of the working land base. There are forces amongst us, who I've referred to previously this morning as preservationist forces, who almost act as if the only fitting use of British Columbia's land base is to let it all go back to nature. I always wonder how those people make a living and whether they don't live in houses like the rest of us. They probably don't drive automobiles and take trips on airplanes.

We have to have a vibrant economy in British Columbia. We're going to have it again. I'm tremendously proud of this government's working forest legislation and the fact that people in the heartlands of British Columbia, where I've lived all my life, can know for sure that government has moved legislatively to ensure that they will continue to have huge areas of this province that are open to them to make their living on and to cause their communities to thrive once again. Whether it's the encouragement of mining exploration, which I discussed earlier this morning, the support of agriculture or the encouragement and development of aquaculture, including shellfish farming.... All of these things are good, viable and proper ways to use the wonderful resources that Mother Nature has conferred upon us here to make this a province where we have a thriving economy that can support the social programs that are so important to us, especially health care and education.

The land resource management planning process in the Kamloops region was the first one that was completed in the province. Two young men named Gary Reay and Kevin Kriese were the facilitators. They set a benchmark for the province to follow. It was such a respectful, inclusive process that included all of the many interests that appeared at the table.

[1150]

The process, from many people's point of view, was captured in the nineties and used for very different purposes by preservationist types of people, but it's absolutely important that that balance exists between the economic interests and the environmental concerns. Certainly, we can do that, and I think we do set an example for the world in doing so. I'm going to be very brief, because there's another important resolution that my colleagues wish to discuss, but I wanted to be on record supporting this resolution.

Deputy Speaker: Seeing no other speakers, shall Motion 46 pass?

An Hon. Member: Division.

Deputy Speaker: Division has been called. Members, pursuant to standing orders, division will be at 8:30 this evening.

Hon. P. Bell: I call private members' Motion 68.

Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 68 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEERS

(continued)

R. Lee: I would like to speak on the motion brought forward by member for Vancouver-Langara: "Be it resolved that this House recognizes that support for volunteers encourages both individual and collective responsibility in our society."

This motion raises two important elements: first, the support of volunteers and, second, the individual and collective responsibility in our society. The motion is about linking these two elements together with the action "encouragement."

What are the individual and collective responsibilities in our society? In our society we usually hear more about rights than responsibilities. However, looking at the number of charities, non-profit organizations and religious groups which have the mandate to educate and the enhancement of individual and collective responsibilities in our society, we must admit that we very much treasure individual and collective responsibilities.

When a non-profit organization is working to stop drunk driving, it is encouraging individual and collective responsibilities in our society. When a non-profit organization is helping youth improve their leadership skills, it is encouraging individual and collective responsibilities. When a non-profit organization is providing seniors opportunities to exercise, it's encouraging individual and collective responsibilities.

In Burnaby, which is just like other communities in British Columbia, we have many charities, non-profit organizations and religious groups that rely on many volunteers to carry on their mandates and to deliver the services. These services, in turn, encourage many individual and collective responsibilities in our society.

It's impossible to list all these organizations here, but I would like to mention a few which are doing an exceptional job in fostering volunteerism and providing tremendous benefit to our society. We have the Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion; the Burnaby Family Life Institute; the Burnaby Hospice Society; the Burnaby Hospital Foundation; the Burnaby Mental Wealth Society; the Burnaby Multicultural Society; the Burnaby Optimist Club; Volunteer Burnaby; the Canadian Red Cross Society; Charlford House Society for Women; HANS, Health Action Network Society; Mainstream Association for Proactive Community Living; Rotary clubs; Scouts Canada; the Salvation Army; United Way; and the Variety Club of B.C.

Each and every one of these organizations and undoubtedly many other organizations and charity and religious groups, as well, have done so much for our citizens that they deserve full recognition and support. We must also recognize that many of these organizations will not succeed without the support of volunteers.

Recently I was pleased to have the opportunity to co-chair with Bryony Hollick of Volunteer Burnaby in organizing the first-ever Burnaby Festival of Volunteers. Volunteers from over 40 organizations participated, and we received many positive encouragements.

I fully support this motion put forward by the member for Vancouver-Langara. I also urge my colleagues to pass this motion today.

[1155]

Hon. P. Bell: I would be pleased to speak to this motion as well. Volunteerism truly is one of the key components of a healthy society. I think, unfortunately, through the 1990s that may have been missed. I recall an experience that I had, actually, in volunteering as a coach of a volleyball team. It was an interesting experience because the complexities that were related to that particular experience were almost one to discourage a person from volunteering.... One had to go through a tremendous amount of effort to become a volunteer in that particular organization.

I think there was a period of time where we actually discouraged volunteerism. I know that this government has been very supportive of the notion of having volunteers. Ultimately, it's critical for a healthy society to have that sort of volunteerism.

With that, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Hon. P. Bell moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. P. Bell moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned until 2 p.m. today.

The House adjourned at 11:56 a.m.