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**5TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT**

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MONDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2004

The House met at 10:03 a.m.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Prayers.

### Private Members' Statements

#### WOMEN IN SMALL BUSINESS

**G. Trumper:** Today I rise to talk about our province's ever-expanding business community. As we celebrate Small Business Week, I would like to highlight the important contribution women make to small business around this province.

British Columbia has the highest rate of business ownership by women in the country. Almost 37 percent of all small businesses are owned by women, which is amazing when you consider that 98 percent of businesses are small businesses. Small businesses provide 58 percent of all private sector jobs, a third of all wages paid to British Columbia employees and a third of British Columbia exports. You can see that small business drives our economy.

Women lead British Columbia in business growth and are making rapid gains in business ownership. The number of women with incorporated businesses has more than doubled in the past ten years.

[1005]

As our province continues to lead Canada in job growth, small businesses will continue to be the lead role in our economy. Over the past three years this government has worked hard to remove the obstacles that businesses face. By removing the hurdles, the provincial government has provided more opportunities for businesses to succeed, more employment for British Columbians and a greater ability for British Columbians to provide for their families.

In order to remove obstacles to success in business, the government has provided tax relief, reduced red tape and given small business tax credits, giving them greater access to venture capital and new investments. All these measures create employment and stimulate our economy.

Women thinking about starting a business have many questions about how to do so. These questions include how to balance the demands of business with family responsibilities, whether they should work from home and how to build a support network. Many women face difficulties in starting new small businesses. Many women take time away from the workforce to raise children. They may lack, in some cases, the conventional job experience expected by business lenders, and this can make starting a business more difficult.

Some women will be seniors who are starting a business to supplement their retirement income. Often these businesses will be based on something that has been a passion for many years. Often women face the

difficulty of applying for financing for the first time in their lives. If assets and credit cards are owned in their partner's name, which is still the case in some cases, women will be less likely to have enough credit to get the required financing for their businesses.

Women often have greater responsibilities in their homes than men do, and it is important that such women be able to strike the balance between work and family. With increasing frequency, men and women are taking on a more equal share of the responsibility for earning money for their families, but all too often, it is women who are the primary caregivers for children and aging parents.

The majority of single families are headed by women, and it's very important that these people have access to all the opportunities available in the business world to provide for their families. When someone wants to start a small business, they will start by gathering information. They will search the Web and seek advice from friends and families. Recognizing the important contributions women make to small business in the B.C. economy, our government recently announced a new publication — *Starting your Business: A Guide to Resources for B.C. Women* — to support women who want to start their own business.

The guide features useful advice on issues like working from home, marketing, setting out work-life balance and building a support network. The government's goal during Small Business Week is to help British Columbians understand what the business community in our province already knows. Through publications like this guide, the provincial government is providing potential B.C. business owners with the vital information they require to achieve their entrepreneurial dreams.

This guide provides women with a good starting point to help us take our creative ideas and turn them into successful businesses. The government clearly wants to ensure that anyone starting a business has the best chance of success. This government is using the guide to provide potential small business women with knowledge and tools to achieve that goal, whether they require advice on working from home, marketing, how to manage work and personal life or how to build a support network.

The government also identified an opportunity to meet the needs of today's information-rich environment. Literally hundreds of websites and other resources are available, including some geared toward women and some tailored for British Columbia entrepreneurs. Finding and identifying the most appropriate sites for British Columbia women can be a challenge. For women without easy Internet access, it can be daunting at times.

The small business guide is about two-thirds information and one-third inspiration. In this guide, eight women share their stories. These women are examples of how women can achieve business success while meeting some of the unique challenges they face. Whether women are returning to the workforce after years in the home raising children, applying for financ-

ing for the first time or considering how to achieve a work-life balance, this guide will help them.

[1010]

I would like to talk about one of these women, whom I know very well: Dolly Watts. I first met her in Port Alberni when she was the aboriginal liaison with school district 70 and I was on the school board. At the age of 49, she went to university. At 57 she started a catering business, and at 60 she opened Liliget Feast House, a restaurant specializing in aboriginal food. If you've had the opportunity to go to it in Vancouver, it is quite an experience. It is the only aboriginal restaurant in this country, and since it was opened, she has won numerous awards and gets to express her Gitksan heritage and culture with her customers. Her success shows us that it's never too late to follow a dream or an idea and make it a success.

Women entrepreneurs are diverse. They are university graduates, single mothers, homemakers, seniors looking to supplement their retirement income — and the list goes on and on. I would now like to hand the speaking over to my colleague.

**W. McMahon:** Thanks to my colleague from Alberni-Qualicum for highlighting the important contribution women make to small business around this province. It really is a great time to be in business in British Columbia. We have finally turned the corner. British Columbia now leads the country in economic growth, and small businesses in British Columbia are the most optimistic in the country.

I say this is great news, and it didn't just happen. The provincial government set the foundation for this turnaround. As the Premier has said, it's about free enterprise. We took the steps to create an economic climate where businesses can succeed, and businesses are responding by creating jobs, increasing sales and bringing people back to our province to live and work.

As the member for Alberni-Qualicum pointed out, in B.C., women own and operate 36 percent of small businesses, the highest rate in the country. It's an impressive number. I was speaking to my colleague from Delta South last week, a woman who has run a small business for most of her adult life. She will tell us, quite adamantly, of course, that the rewards of owning your own business are extraordinary. You're your own boss. You see your ideas translated into action. You have flexibility with respect to your family. You can plan your future. You make wonderful friends. You have a say in your community. And sometimes you even get to sleep.

It does not come without challenges. Starting a business is no easy task. There is always the challenge of finding the right employees, and in doing so, you are training individuals for future successes. I think one of the greatest strengths of women in business is that rather than seeing other women entrepreneurs as competition, they are supporters, mentors and people to network with.

My colleague from Alberni-Qualicum mentioned a new resource guide. When I saw it, I recognized it as

an incredibly useful and inspirational tool for any woman wanting to realize her dream. It is possible. The fact is that when women in business succeed, we all benefit from a stronger, more diverse economy, and we all benefit from an economy where everyone has opportunities to realize their goals and contribute back to their communities.

I look around my community, the broader community of Columbia River-Revelstoke, and think about some extremely successful women entrepreneurs. Elana Rosenfeld, Kicking Horse Coffee — you may have seen Elana on a TV ad for the Business Development Bank that has been running lately. Dee Conklin, Palliser Printing in Invermere, a successful businesswoman working in an industry generally dominated by men. Tessa Elkington, Golden Flowers, a woman using her creativity to enhance the lives of many through the beauty of her floral creations as well as to provide unique merchandise to consumers. Tanya Secord, Mary Kay Cosmetics, a very successful home-based business.

Gail Bernacki, a lawyer in Revelstoke. Being in this profession is a huge time commitment; it's a job that is driven by high demands. Arlene Creasy, Holmes Insurance in Kimberley, a busy office serving not only business but our own personal needs, providing choices and information relating to complex topics — a person who is relied on by all of her customers.

These are successful women balancing family and work, all making history in their own way. These women inspire us through their commitment, their creativity, their vision. They have worked hard and are making their dreams a reality.

[1015]

In closing, I would like to acknowledge my colleague from Alberni-Qualicum. With our expanding business climate in British Columbia, she has focused her topic on a very important sector of our economy. Today, not only do I want to recognize women in small business, I want to take this opportunity to recognize all of British Columbia's small business owners. Small business drives our economy. Congratulations, and best wishes for future success.

**G. Trumper:** I would certainly like to thank the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke for her response. This government's aim, of course, is to make the whole of British Columbia a destination of choice for those wishing to start a business, create jobs and contribute to the economic well-being of this province. This is our vision, and that's the vision of our Premier. Our provincial government is moving to take advantage of every opportunity the economy can provide for people to find good jobs. Our guide will undoubtedly help more women get into business and succeed.

We are starting to reap the benefits of the changes we've made; 167,000 new jobs have been created since we took office. People are moving back to British Columbia. The number of new business incorporations is up. The economy is forecast to grow rapidly, and this is a change from the stagnant economy of the last decade.

We have more opportunities available to men and women alike to work, to provide for their families and to realize their dreams. I am very proud that we have been able to put in place the ways and means to enable women to achieve their dreams in small business.

#### DOCTOR RECRUITMENT

**K. Stewart:** Good morning, Mr. Speaker. This morning I would like to present a snapshot of three items. First would be health care in B.C. and in my riding; second, the need for doctors and other health care professionals to be recruited and retained; and third, why Maple Ridge–Pitt Meadows is such a desirable spot for relocation for health care professionals.

In Maple Ridge we have approximately 80,000 people, and our health care is focused around the acute health care centre at the Ridge Meadows Hospital, which was opened in 1956. It's a fast-growing community, with housing development being a major industry in the community.

I would just like to touch now on health care in general in British Columbia. The cost of health care in British Columbia has tripled in the past 20 years. It now takes up over 42 percent of the provincial budget. The cost of pharmaceuticals has also increased. In the 1990s, with the population increase of 18 percent, drug expenditures were up 147 percent, and prescriptions were up over 50 percent. With the spiralling trend continuing, health care costs are up in all areas: hospitals and facilities, equipment and technologies, prevention and promotion, drugs, Pharmacare, senior care, mental health, and training and education.

Contrary to what many special interest groups have been promoting, there has not been any overall cut to health care in British Columbia. In fact, health care expenditures have increased by \$2 billion under our government. An example would be Pharmacare expenditures, which were increased by 17 percent in the year 2001, where the previous government had only budgeted for a funding increase of 2 percent.

Demands on our health care system — the most pressing being those placed on our system by the aging population. Eighty percent of the average health care dollar is spent on an individual in the first two and last two years of their lives, with the majority used in the last two. Based on the 2001 stats in British Columbia, this would be approximately \$196,560 per person that would be spent over your lifetime. Now, these are averages. We all know of the person who is hardly sick all their life. They lived a very long life and died in their sleep, with very limited impact on our health care system. Contrarily, we also know of the child with a very difficult birth who has required very expensive medical care and support through their whole life, and some years that individual may utilize more than the average B.C. citizen does in their entire lifetime.

[1020]

Our aging population is a difficult situation for us. With the cost of our health care needs.... Again, on average, they start ramping up dramatically over 60

years of age. With 42 percent of our population currently between the ages of 35 and 65 and with a demographic bulge of baby-boomers between the ages of 45 and 55 — many of us are now in that stage — we are going to see a dramatically increased demand on our services over the next five years. As we do, increasing numbers of procedures that we're doing now.... We had thousands more procedures last year, and the demand just increases.

Many people will talk about the long waiting lists, but one of the things they fail to realize is that the demand is going up and that we're actually doing many more operations this year than last year and more than the previous year. The new age we're living in is allowing procedures that were unheard of just a few years ago. This is also dramatically increasing the costs. How many people do you know who either recently had a hip or knee replacement or are waiting for one? Now think back 20 years ago. How many people did you even know that had a hip or knee replacement? We want it all today and we want it now. This is creating a demand on our health care system.

Now, on to the funding of health care. Seventy percent of our health care costs are included in wages to nurses and doctors and health care employees. Nurses have recently received a 23 percent increase over the past three years, while doctors have seen a dramatic increase of 20 percent over the past two years. With these dramatic salary increases you would think recruitment and retention of doctors and nurses would be an easy process — not so, with an international and national shortage not only of doctors and nurses but of other skilled technical support people who are also in very high demand.

The age of doctors and nurses is also following our earlier-noted demographic trend with a majority of doctors and nurses in their forties and fifties. Retirement is a nearing focus for many. Interestingly enough, the stock market crash brought us a few extra years, along with many other pension funds that lost big. Many doctors had to readjust their retirement plans, and as a result of the fact that the stock market went down, we're privileged to have many more doctors who have to work just a few more years to get their retirement funds up to where they would like them to be.

A side note to this is that as a result of the loss to many pension plans over that period of time, medical and dental insurance items were dropped for many pensioners, who blamed the government for cuts, when these were optional items brought in by pension managers during the years of high returns. Provincially funded portions of their pension plans remained constant throughout this time.

Now, how we fund health care. Initially, there was a 50-50 split with the federal government. That's how health care was set up and designed in Canada. Currently, it's more like 83-17, with the provinces carrying 83 percent of that. If it were left at the 50-50 mark, we would have about \$6 billion more to spend on health care each year — a significant amount.

Many people look at our current debt situation and say: "Well, you know, I paid for health care over the sixties, seventies and eighties, and now I'm entitled to it." Interestingly enough, when we look back over the seventies, eighties and nineties, we were a net borrower of funds for all our services. The \$400 billion federally and the \$40 billion provincially of debt that's been accrued.... Many of those dollars contributed to services that we actually received but didn't really pay for during those years. Those, including myself, who had a very good time through the eighties and nineties have to pay for that now. Many seniors realize, through their pensions that aren't increasing that much, that these costs are also going to be reflected on them.

I talked earlier about a need for recruitment. I have to applaud the Minister of Advanced Education for a number of initiatives to train more nurses and doctors in British Columbia and also the Minister of Health Services for placement incentives and creating centres of excellence. But there is still a short-term shortage of doctors and nurses as a result of the lag time to train these extra professionals and the number due to retire. Pressure from other jurisdictions to recruit also adds to the demand for their needs. Increased demand due to our aging population is a significant problem for the coming years.

We have some strategies to cope with this situation. One is to keep what you have. That is, the basic rules in sales say that the customer you have is the best one you can get. In the case of our doctors and nurses, there was a significant increase in wages that was needed to keep them here. Also, we have to know what the other jurisdictions across Canada are doing. We have to be competitive, and we have to be able to afford what other provinces can in specific areas of need.

We have to be proactive and get our message out about why people should come to B.C. I have more to say about why Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows is a wonderful place for these people to come, but I will hold it until after I hear the comments from my colleague from Maple Ridge-Mission.

[1025]

**R. Hawes:** Thank you to my colleague from Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows for raising the topic of recruitment and the shortage we have now in the health field, particularly in the speciality fields for doctors. Actually, it's nurses as well. We have a shortage of nurses. He mentioned the fact that this government has opened new seats in the colleges and universities. The University of Northern British Columbia, for the first time, has medical seats for doctors, for example, and there are a number of new seats for nurses.

I think back to the early 1990s, when the previous government followed a report that said we actually had too many doctors and too many nurses. They took steps, actually, to ensure that we didn't have an expansion. It was a very shortsighted and wrongheaded move, and Dr. Jack Burak, the head of the B.C. Medical Association, has recently made comments that that

move has contributed a great deal to the problems we have today when we see wait-lists, etc.

I want to talk for a moment about the way we used to do business in health care. I'm one of the old dogs that sat on a hospital board and thought that was the right way to go, and I did not like regionalization when it happened in 1997. I thought it was a wrongheaded move by the government, but we've moved down that path. This government has taken the 52 health regions that the former government formed in 1987 and reduced those to five plus one provincial region, and that larger regionalization has created a situation where we do have what my colleague mentioned as centres of excellence.

What used to be was that many small community hospitals would struggle along with one specialist in one field or another, and the specialist frequently had no backup and would be on call. I know of specialists in this province that were on call seven days a week, 365 days a year. I know that when we visited Terrace, we met one who had been on call that way for over 20 years. The specialists were facing burnout. They prefer to work in pods of five, where they work one night out of five on call and have four nights off. That allows them to escape what I guess I would call burnout.

With regionalization and with the centres of excellence in each region, there are hospitals now that are regional in scope, that have attracted the specialists and bring them together in teams where there is backup. For example, if an obstetrician wants to practice with a pediatrician, with probably a surgeon and with anesthesiologists, there has to be a full team of specialists — a full complement. That's quite possible and does happen in the regional scenario, but it was not possible in the old structure with the old hospital boards of small community hospitals that often didn't communicate with one another.

The other thing that's happening is very interesting, Mr. Speaker, and I want you to imagine this. A new hospital is going to be constructed in our region that affects Maple Ridge, affects Mission and Abbotsford and Chilliwack. That hospital will have a cancer centre built with it. For the first time in the history of this province, we're going to actually construct a hospital with a cancer centre attached that is integrated. The services are integrated. It is highly imaginative, and a ton of planning has gone in where there is out-of-the-box thinking.

It is so exciting when this hospital is going to have state-of-the-art technologies, a fully integrated system among the hospital, the cancer agency and the acute care side of medicine — a tremendous advancement. That is going to be a magnet hospital for specialists.

The other thing in terms of recruitment, the one that's forgotten quite often, is community. Communities need to take part along with the health authorities in reaching out to recruit specialists. That's because they have families, and it is often the family who makes the final decision as to where the specialist's residence will be. We need to engage the families so they come out and see the attributes of the community

and of the region. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I know you are very familiar with the Fraser Valley and wish that you yourself could move there some day, like many people here.

[1030]

It is just an absolutely wonderful place to live. I know that within the Fraser Valley we are able to recruit specialists because, through the engagement of community and showing the attributes of the region, the wives, husbands and families of the specialists we're trying to recruit start to push to say: "Let's move there. It's a lot nicer living in Mission, Maple Ridge or Abbotsford in January than it is living St. Boniface, Manitoba." You know, it's no reflection on St. Boniface, but I just happen to think this is a much nicer place to live.

We are going to win the recruitment battle for doctors and nurses. This government is taking every step it needs to take to ensure that we have and are going to win the competition internationally for these very short-supplied, highly educated people.

I want to thank my colleague from Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows. In our communities, he has led the drive for recruitment and changing immigration laws so we can attract these people more easily. I know he is going to end with a very stirring conclusion.

**K. Stewart:** I want to first thank my colleague from Maple Ridge-Mission and commend him for the work he's done with health care. I know he sits on two very formidable committees over here in Victoria, has worked very hard to get the word out to many people about alternative types of health care issues and has been very supportive of the work we're doing with regard to health care for this province.

In my conclusion, I'd just like to touch on the great response that we did have to recruitment in Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows. But there are doctors and nurses out there who are getting caught up over issues of immigration and skills recognition. I'm pleased to see that we are now getting some very positive indicators from our provincial nominee program, which should help us assist in that issue.

We in Maple Ridge have recently got quite an interest from both British and South African doctors — very highly skilled and trained. There are currently a number of South African doctors just waiting for their landed immigrant status who are currently practising in Maple Ridge, and they have many more friends with highly skilled, professional specialities who are looking forward to coming also. If we can get that synergy there and get our issues with immigration so that we're competitive with other provinces, I'm sure that will be a great asset to us.

Now, what does attract them to Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows? My colleague indicated the difference in climate from other areas of Canada. Certainly, there are not too many areas in Canada, let alone in British Columbia, where you can be mountaineering in the high alpine with snow and ice in the morning, then come down and shoot a round of golf in the afternoon, tak-

ing your case out there with your golf clubs in it. The other thing we have there is education. We have a wonderful education system. We have a very proactive school board that is delivering good service with the dollars we're getting for them. A very healthy lifestyle can be had there. We have very active community groups, from our art gallery to our new upgraded leisure centre. We have museums. We have bike trails. The Trans Canada Trail goes through there. We have so many positive things that you can do.

**Parks.** I was looking over the list of parks alphabetically, and there is not a letter that doesn't have at least one park named after it. The opportunities are there with the rivers, the fishing, the hiking, the golfing. We have three world-class golf courses in our area. There are Alouette Lake, Pitt Lake, Golden Ears Park, Grant Narrows Park — large parks.

**Wildlife viewing.** We have the Pitt Polder, one of the greatest areas for birdwatching in North America. We all know what the number one sport is as far as watching things. It's birdwatching, more so than NFL football, surprisingly enough — of course, maybe not on some Sundays. Generally, during the week, birdwatching is the number one participatory sport in North America.

With all these attributes, no wonder these doctors want to come to Maple Ridge. I just want to thank Mr. Speaker for the time he has given me today to outline these issues and also to continue in the promotion of Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows.

BSE

**W. Cobb:** Today I will talk about the ongoing BSE saga. I will touch a bit on how we got here and what is being done to assist this very important industry in getting through what has been described as one of the worst situations in the cattle industry's history.

[1035]

The cattle and beef industry has been hit hard by the outbreak of BSE, more commonly known as mad cow disease. It started with an affected cow being discovered in Alberta in early 2003. As a result, exports of beef and cattle from Canada were banned by several countries and effectively ceased for a few months. Some trade has since resumed, but the discovery of another affected cow in Washington State in late December was tracked back to Alberta, has further exacerbated the problem and has made the return to normal trade in the near future unlikely.

The export of live cattle and beef products from Canada dropped effectively to zero after the discovery of this affected cow. It was months before some of the trade restrictions were eased and select cuts of beef were allowed to pass over the border.

From B.C., it is not so much the halt in trade of beef that was the problem but the restriction of shipments of live cattle. B.C. exported \$118 million worth of live cattle in 2002 compared to only \$3.4 million worth of beef. The ban on imports of Canadian cattle into the U.S. has resulted in an expanded livestock population

in Canada. In B.C. as of January 1 there were 74,000 cattle compared to only 68,300 a year earlier. There were almost 1.2 million more cattle in all of Canada than a year ago.

The excess of cattle and no place to sell them have resulted in further problems for the cattle ranchers. The price they are getting for their cattle has dropped substantially, so even the cattle they can sell are not bringing in much revenue. There are ranchers who are forced to sell their entire herd because they cannot get enough money selling just part of their herd to pay for the feed for the rest of them. I mentioned a while ago that a few weeks ago I was at a cattle sale in Williams Lake where there were animals being sold for 13 cents a pound. At that price, the producer was getting about \$150 for an animal that he should have been getting upwards of \$1,500 for.

In addition, severe drought conditions in recent years have left some ranchers without a good source of feed. This has also driven up their costs. To make it worse, in parts of my area particularly, the rain came when they should have been bringing in their harvest or the little foilage they had.

To aid in the turnaround of the industry, ranchers see the need for a greater Canadian slaughter capacity and for government to take a tougher stand against supplementary beef imports. At the recent industry meeting, most of the attendants agreed that slaughterhouses should be allowed to do 100 percent of the BSE testing if they so desire, although 70 percent of them rejected the call for the mass depopulation of culled cows.

Industry leaders believe it is time for a made-in-Canada solution which would take away the industry's dependency on the U.S. We only produce 2 percent of the world's beef, yet we are the third- or fourth-largest exporter. Canada used to export 80 percent of our beef to the U.S., but that represents only 6 percent of the U.S. consumption. So remember: we depend on the U.S.; they don't depend on us. The question has been asked: why would the U.S. want to open the borders? American plants in Canada are making record profits, and they are getting as much beef as they need with boneless beef exports, so why would they open the border?

Our Minister of Agriculture and the federal government have taken steps to assist ranchers and farmers, including numerous meetings with U.S. politicians and administrators at the federal and state levels to reopen the borders. A number of short-term programs have provided over \$39 million so far for B.C. cattle and other ruminant products. The federal and provincial programs initiated are only a stopgap until a permanent solution can be found.

We as a provincial government are participating in a plan to provide ranchers with advanced payments under the Canadian agricultural income stabilization program for registered beef livestock, to be cost-shared with the federal government. That's the CAIS program. The advance payment will enable producers to apply for \$100 per breeding cow and \$50 for other animals.

These payments would be recovered from producers when they make their 2004 claim under the CAIS program for compensation due to the impacts of BSE and the continued border closure to our livestock.

[1040]

The total value of advance payments to B.C. producers could exceed \$30 million this year. The costs will be shared between the federal government and the provincial government on a 60-40 plan.

We recognize that our producers are suffering financially and are facing considerable uncertainty this fall as to what the market will provide for the price of their calves. This initiative in itself will not correct the impact of the border closure, but it will provide our producers with a much-needed cash flow while they consider their options as we move forward. There will also be up to \$6 million available for the feeder cattle set-aside program. This should ease the pressure on markets and slaughter capacity.

The objective of the set-aside program, of course, is to set aside up to 40 percent of the beef calves. A \$200-per-head payment will compensate participating ranchers to help cover feed and other costs. The program will pay the ranchers and farmers to keep their calves from market. The target is up to 70,000 calves holdback for slaughter, and that should bolster the calf prices this fall. Grants will allow eligible producers to set aside portions of the 2004 calf production. At least 30 percent of the owners' calves must be set aside to participate in this program.

The set-aside program will help industry adapt to the new market realities created by the border closure and help British Columbia producers stay competitive. The aim is a B.C. cattle industry contributing to the economic well-being of the communities with or without the U.S. border being open to live cattle. This is only part of the solution that ranchers support, and the intent is that the set-aside program will help reduce our reliance on export markets.

There are steps underway to reposition Canada's livestock industry and include....

Interjection.

**W. Cobb:** Sorry. I understand we have a time allotment here, and I'm sorry I went over it. With that time allotment, I will await the response from my colleague from Peace River South, as he has some other things to say on this.

**Deputy Speaker:** The member for Victoria-Beacon Hill seeks the floor.

**J. Bray:** I seek leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

#### Introductions by Members

**J. Bray:** Joining us in the gallery now are several visitors. We have Prof. William Neilson, who is retired

from the University of Victoria, the centre for Asia-Pacific studies. With Professor Neilson are several delegates from Vietnam: Dr. Duong Thi Thanh Mai, Mrs. Le Thi Son, Ms. Do Thi Ngoc, Mr. Cao Xuang Phong and Mr. Hoan Quoc Nguyen. They're here to study parliamentary systems. I ask the House to make them all very welcome.

### Debate Continued

**B. Lekstrom:** It is a privilege to rise in this House today to respond to my colleague from Cariboo South's statements regarding BSE, or mad cow, as it's commonly known. He's touched on many important issues that we face in British Columbia and in Canada. The true issue is about families. It's about our food producers in British Columbia and across our country — the people that I believe are in the most important industry we have. We have our ranching industry and our agriculture industry that produce our food supply that allows society to move on and produce future generations of technological advancement and so on. Without our food supply we wouldn't have a whole lot to move forward with.

The BSE crisis was caused originally by a single cow. It was found roughly 80 miles from my home in Dawson Creek, across the Alberta border. To look at what it's done to our country, to our province and to the ranching families right across our province and country is devastating. It's unbelievable that we see a country south of the border, the United States, take the action that they have. I think, understandably, we would react initially in the same way — to make sure that the science was in place and that the chain of food safety was looked after. We did that time and time again. Unfortunately, it hasn't been accepted by our neighbours to the south.

This issue is about more than a mad cow. It's about more than the food supply and the safety of it. It's about families — ranching families that have worked generation after generation to develop a herd and live off the land base, to raise their animals so that they can provide for their children and their future. Now it's coming to a standstill. It's unacceptable to me. I know it's unacceptable to my colleagues in this chamber, regardless of political stripe, and it's unacceptable to the Canadian people. Something has to be done.

[1045]

My colleague from Cariboo South talked about the assistance programs that are in place to help our ranching industry through this. As he indicated, this isn't the end resolve. This is a resolve to help them through these tough times — and extremely tough times they are.

We have a situation where Canada is still accepting TRQs, or tariff required quotas. I believe they have slowed down on the supplementary quota imports. It's hard for me and for many of the people I represent to believe that while our ranching industry is on its knees trying to survive and trying to keep its families with food and clothing and their children provided with the

needs they need, we are importing a single pound of beef from any country in this world. To me, that's unacceptable.

I know people will argue that with the WTO and the trade agreements out there, we can't stop that import. Well, it's my belief that long before I'm going to let people that I represent and Canadians and their families suffer, I'm going to stand up and fight for the stopping of the importation of beef to our country until we get our own house in order and are able to provide for the ranching families of this great country.

We also have to look at our slaughter capacity. We are an export nation, as was indicated by my colleague, and we overproduce cattle, but we do it in a way that is sustainable — or was sustainable, up until this unfortunate incident of one mad cow, with a second being found later on south of the border but, interestingly enough, traced right back to Alberta. The issue that we're facing today is not about food safety. It's about politics — politics in every sense of the word. It's very unfortunate when you look at what takes place south of the border.

Last year the community of Dawson Creek, in cooperation with our surrounding rural area, hosted a barbecue in downtown Dawson Creek and invited everybody to come out for a big beef barbecue. It was tremendous — the support that was put forward by the people in the business community. People came out to express their gratitude for the contribution our ranching industry makes.

What was more interesting is that we're at mile zero of the Alaska Highway in Dawson Creek and have hundreds of thousands of tourists travel through our city each year on their way up the highway. Many of them are Americans. The American people I had the opportunity to speak with during that day were amazed at what was really going on with their government and what had happened with the closure of the border. Most, if not all, of them didn't know what their government had done as a result of this mad cow. It was unfortunate, but I can tell you I had a great deal of respect for the people from the U.S. that I had a chance to talk to. Their understanding, I think, and the knowledge they gained through that day is something they can take back with them and talk to their neighbours and friends about so that we can get this issue solved.

The key issue, I guess, on that is that I have a great deal of respect for the American people, but right now, on this issue, I have no respect for the American government — none whatsoever. We're talking about an issue where they're putting families at risk. When they put families at risk, they're putting the children of those families at risk. It's unacceptable.

We will do the best we can in British Columbia and Canada to change the closure of that border. We're going to need the cooperation of our neighbours to the south. Once again, I'd like to call them friends, but until they stop their internal protectionist attitude towards the Canadian export of our goods and services, there's not a lot of good I can have to say about the U.S. government at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity, and I thank my colleague from Cariboo South.

**W. Cobb:** I thank the member for Peace River South for that passionate response. I will continue on with what I didn't get to finish because of the time.

There are steps, as has been said, that have been undertaken to reposition Canada's livestock industry. They include continuing efforts to re-open the border, taking steps to increase ruminant slaughter facilities in Canada, introducing measures to sustain the cattle industry until capacity comes on line and expanding access to export markets for both livestock and beef products other than the U.S.

Government will take steps to facilitate the building of slaughter capacity in Canada. Plans are already under way to expand our capacity. In order to accelerate this process, a number of measures are being taken.

Those measures are.... There are four steps, actually, that we're taking.

Re-opening the border. The North American cattle industry has been highly integrated, and the ongoing border closure is having a significant impact on both sides of the border.

[1050]

We need to facilitate increased slaughter capacity. While industry has already begun to build new capacity aggressively, it will take time before it can reach self-sufficiency. Other efforts, however, will allow industry to capitalize on markets currently open.

Sustaining the industry until capacity is increased. Measures are underway to sustain the industry until capacity is increased to help address the flow and liquidity issues faced by our producers.

Finally, expanding export markets. This part will continue to strengthen Canada's scientific and regulatory base and to effectively communicate those initiatives as part of the concentrated effort to expand international market share for beef products and genetics, as well as further our efforts to enhance our national surveillance program. Government will and must continue to support the international market development efforts of the beef and other ruminant industries as they seek to restore and expand our export markets. As in the forest industry, we must reduce our reliance on the U.S. counterparts.

#### SENIORS WELL-BEING

**J. Nuraney:** Today I would like to talk about the well-being of our seniors. It is most unfortunate that in our society as it moves into the twenty-first century and in the age of technological advancement, time has become a very important commodity and is mostly consumed in personal enhancement. Gone is the time when we had time for our friends and family. Gone is the time when we considered our elders as a significant part of our lives and considered it to be our sacred responsibility and duty to take care of them.

In my culture we touch the feet of our elders when we meet them. This is a symbolic gesture, and it means

that if you are seeking paradise, you will find it under the feet of your elders. Our elders in their youth paved the way and shed sweat and tears for us to enjoy a better life. At this point we are indeed enjoying the fruits of their labour. It is therefore incumbent on us to ensure that they enjoy the final stages of their lives with dignity, comfort and security.

Recently, with the help of my colleagues in Burnaby, I organized a seniors forum to discuss their most pressing concerns. This meeting took place at Burnaby's Alan Emmott Centre and was attended by over 100 seniors from Burnaby. My three fellow Burnaby MLAs joined me in welcoming the Minister of Health Services, who took part in the forum and answered many questions. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Michelle Sigurdson and Barbara Spitz for their help in acting as facilitators for this forum.

The participants at this forum had a very good opportunity to voice their concerns. The minister, in replying to their questions, explained the government policies and initiatives taken in alleviating some of these problems. Among the matters raised were long waits at hospitals, waiting lists for surgeries, Pharmacare, home support services, assisted living and number of beds, extended care homes and uncertainty around proximity, need for gyms for seniors, promotion of campus of care and inclusion of podiatry services for diabetics.

The most prominent of their concerns, however, surprisingly enough, revolved around their personal safety and security. Sadly, many seniors in my community are frightened. It is not only on our streets; the seniors do not feel safe in their own homes.

[1055]

I remember well the period of the 1990s when the issue of home invasions targeting seniors became a very prominent public matter. The Vancouver police department created a specific task force to combat the wave of these attacks. Even though such attacks have somewhat reduced, they have not completely ceased. Apart from these home invasions, our seniors are also targets of fraud, mugging on the streets, physical abuse, violence and crimes perpetrated to take advantage of their vulnerability. Dr. Neil Boyd of Simon Fraser University described it as "a wave of fear among the most vulnerable segments of our population."

These circumstances are not acceptable. We must never rest until seniors feel safe in their own communities and, more importantly, in their own homes. We must ask ourselves what actions we can take as a government and as citizens to restore a sense of safety among the senior population.

I was particularly proud of our Premier's recent announcement that the government will honour the commitment to deliver traffic fine revenues to the British Columbia municipalities to enable them to reinforce and strengthen our police forces and safety measures. Our government is determined to find solutions through consultation with regard to the challenges facing our seniors. Our Minister of Health Services is conducting a seminar next week in Vancouver, inviting

many professionals and experts in the field to help formulate a more stringent policy and to find solutions to these matters that are of most concern to our senior population.

With this, I would like to invite my colleague from Surrey-White Rock to offer his thoughts to the House on this important issue. I'm very pleased that he will be offering his insight, given his vast experience not only in the enforcement of community law but in the issues of seniors.

**G. Hogg:** My congratulations and my thanks to my friend and colleague the member for Burnaby-Willingdon. My congratulations for the leadership he has shown regarding seniors, including the co-hosting of the forum which he previously referenced, and my thanks for the caring and the compassionate approach which he has taken. Often the way we do things is more important than what we do, and he has certainly done with a great deal of sense, respect and compassion.

Considerable information, research and comment are provided by seniors and by many researchers, many writers and many students. We hear of the changing demographics. We hear that in 1972 eight people worked for every one person that was retired, that today it is three people working for every person that is retired and that by 2020 it will be two people working for every one person retired. That is the level currently found in Europe.

B.C. has one of the most rapidly growing aging populations in Canada. As of 2002 we had 551,800 British Columbians of 65 years of age and older. That represented 13.3 percent of our total population, and by 2031 it is estimated that our seniors will represent 24 percent of our population. The changing demographics, combined with our values and beliefs, inform our planning and our future. They help to assist us in providing supports for seniors, some of whom live desperate lives at a time when I think we all hope they will have a more comfortable life and fewer challenges. We regret that there are some seniors in those circumstances.

[1100]

The Dalai Lama said: "No use to just feel regret. We must do something, work together — not from a sense of the holy but from a sense of the necessity." Indeed, we are at a time of the sense of the necessity. Knowledge and insight do not mean change. They inform change. New approaches and cultural shifts all take time, but that reality must not delay us from doing all that we can do.

As my colleague has outlined, seniors' issues are often representative of the issues which affect all British Columbians: health care, wait-lists, home support issues, recreation and — importantly, as he outlined and found through his forum — personal safety and security. The government's action last week, which he referenced, in presenting over \$30 million to communities to work on personal and public safety issues is a tangible response to this challenge.

It is a response that seniors can, should and must, indeed, be involved with. In order for that response to be successful, seniors must be engaged in the decision-making process. That's why this funding was given to local communities: so that there could be the engagement of the communities in making decisions that respond to the local needs of their communities, and in particular, to the health, safety and security needs of those communities. Seniors, being an integral part of that, have wonderful insights and experiences. They have those for themselves, for each other, for communities and, indeed, for government.

We are working with them to plan for a safer, more secure future. My colleague from Burnaby-Willingdon has been an integral part of that planning process and of informing all of us in terms of that process for a better future for seniors.

We can learn a great deal from the traditions of other cultures. Reverence and respect for seniors, as referenced by my colleague, are indeed important values for our culture as we continue to meet the challenges before us, learning from the values of other cultures and applying them with the tangible actions which he has looked at, recommended and referenced.

My congratulations again and my thanks to my colleague from Burnaby-Willingdon for bringing these forward and for continuing to work on these important issues with tangible, meaningful actions which will help us have a better future for all British Columbians.

**J. Nuraney:** I thank my colleague from Surrey-White Rock for his very enlightening remarks. As you know, he is well known in this House for his compassion and his ability to find solutions to many challenges that we have initially experienced here in different ministries.

It is important to note that we are facing tremendous challenges in meeting the needs of our elders. This must not deter us from fulfilling what I consider our duty and responsibility to take care of our elders.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to share a story with the members of this House. Once there was a family who had their parents live with them. At dinnertime the son, seeing his parents having difficulties eating their soup, quickly replaced the crockery with a wooden bowl. He had a little son who was also watching as this progressed.

As the dinner moved on, he noticed that the parents were eating their dinner very noisily, so he asked his parents to please move to a table behind them. The young son, who was there at the table, kept watching what was happening. At the end of the dinner, the young son asked his mother for the wooden bowl. The mother, being curious, said: "Son, why do you want that wooden bowl?" The son replied: "Mummy, when you and Daddy become old, I am going to need that wooden bowl." This is not an example of the legacy we want to leave for our next generation.

It is my fervent wish that our government will fulfil our responsibility and our obligation towards our parents and our elders. With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank

you for the opportunity that you have given me this morning.

[1105]

**Deputy Speaker:** Members, that concludes members' statements.

**Hon. K. Falcon:** I call continued debate on Motion No. 4.

**Deputy Speaker:** Hon. Members, pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 4 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

### Motions on Notice

#### TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE (continued)

**K. Stewart:** It's a pleasure today to get up to speak to the motion brought forward by the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke: "Be it resolved that this House recognize the importance of a sound transportation infrastructure to the economy of British Columbia."

We all know how important it is from an economic perspective to move goods around our province, but here in the lower mainland especially it's also very important for the air quality to have vehicles moving at their optimum speed. As many people know, an idling vehicle pollutes much greater than a vehicle that's operating at the speed at which its engine was intended to run.

In British Columbia we have had many improvements in automobiles just from the manufacturer requirements and the requirements put on by both the provincial and federal governments with regards to pollution and smog. We've had a number of requirements for imported vehicles to ensure that they meet the Canadian standards.

We see approximately 70 percent of the pollution in the lower mainland produced from automobiles even though we do have cleaner-burning vehicles, and there are some great new vehicles out there that are going to help enhance that. When we look at the movement of goods, when you have people idling for 50 percent of the time they're travelling in the lower mainland gridlock, that can't be good, so I certainly support the infrastructure improvements that are designated for our area.

Number one, of course, from the Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows perspective, is the new Fraser crossing, which will ensure the transportation of goods and people to their workplaces and to their places of sale. It will allow for vehicle movement, including those transporting goods across to the United States, in a much more direct line.

We also have the twinning of the Port Mann Bridge. The congestion in the morning that backs up, as the morning progresses, to four or five overpasses back on a bad day does nothing but contribute to more pollution to the Fraser Valley. It's not Vancouver that ends up with that pollution. Unfortunately, most of the pollution is pushed up the valley, starting at Chilliwack, where it backs up into heavy smog areas, and comes up through Mission, Maple Ridge and even to Pitt Meadows.

It's very important that we have these infrastructures. Again, I know that the item of the economy of moving them has been touched. Another area that we're getting quite a bit of pollution from is boats idling in the harbour. The quicker we can get those goods off the boats, out of the port facilities, onto the roads, out of the mainland, the better it's going to be for all of us. It's the same thing with the train transportation. The quicker we can get those goods moved out, the faster they get moved, the higher efficiency the engines are running.... We have less pollution and quicker movement of those goods.

Again, to the economic side of it, time is money. The more quickly we can move goods, the more speed will be put forward to the consumer getting them. The retailer gets the products earlier. There's less waiting. We've just seen, with the recent upgrades to the rail line down to the United States, how much, by knocking a couple days off that.... The efficiency of that is going to help not only the economy but the amount of idling time on vehicles.

I'd just like to get up to support this initiative and to look at it from a different perspective, other than just dollars and cents for the movement of goods — also for the quality improvement of our air by having vehicles operating at a highly efficient speed and level. Thank you.

[1110]

**J. Bray:** I am very pleased to rise and support the motion of member for Columbia River-Revelstoke. Transportation and infrastructure really are one of the driving factors of any successful economy, and certainly, as a member of the Select Standing Committee on Finance, that's been one of the most common and dominant themes we've heard throughout the province. As communities' economies are rolling and as investors are making their way into every region of this province, they're recognizing that strategic investments in infrastructure are just going to propel local economies even further — be it mining, the movement of goods, forestry or, in my neck of the woods, tourism.

Members in this House have heard me talk about Victoria, talk about the cultural precinct we have right around downtown Victoria and how we are helping to drive this province's goal of doubling tourism by the year 2015. One of the most important strategic infrastructure projects for my area that would really help achieve that is the upgrade of the Belleville Street terminal, which is right outside the legislative grounds here in the Victoria Harbour. This facility houses the

*Coho* car ferry as well as the *Clipper* passenger high-speed catamarans, which come into downtown Victoria carrying American tourists from Port Angeles and Seattle. It is, in essence, Victoria's border to the U.S.

As we have committed to doubling the Tourism B.C. marketing budget, we know we're going to get more American tourists coming up to British Columbia. Many of those tourists are going to pick Victoria as their destination.

This facility has been around for generations now, and it has far outgrown its useful life as well as its ability to handle the new types of traffic that come in with the *Clipper* catamaran. This \$16 million project to provide for better customs clearance to meet U.S. security regulations and to provide better physical amenities for tourists as they first come into Canada and Victoria, as well as when they last leave — it's the last sight they have — is really critical for Victoria to continue to be one of the economic drivers in the province.

It is also important, as many of these infrastructure projects are, that we have all the partners sitting at the table. Long gone are the days when any one level of government could manage these large projects on their own. Now we actually require partnerships — partnerships from multiple levels of government as well as from the private sector and even the non-profit sector — to make these types of projects go.

The Belleville Street terminal has a wonderful opportunity to increase the ferry passenger traffic for the *Clipper* as well as provide speedier clearance for car traffic going onto the *Coho*. The physical structure itself would also provide opportunities for leasing of restaurant space or pub space or retail commercial space — a number of exciting options that would actually help to revitalize downtown at the same time, with those lease payments helping to pay the costs of construction. There really are some wonderful opportunities that we can support in this infrastructure project to the benefit of not just the U.S. tourists but, in fact, downtown altogether.

Victoria has a working harbour that is becoming a major tourist draw in and of itself. With the expansion of Ogden Point, we've seen a dramatic increase in the number of cruise ships. In fact, last year we had a record 143 cruise ships registered to come in. A few of them couldn't dock because of weather, but it was nonetheless a record year.

What preceded that record year was a \$2 million investment by the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority in expansion of Pier B out at Ogden Point. That infrastructure investment is what allowed the cruise ship companies to recognize greater opportunities to come here, multiple dockings and the expansion of the port capacity. The infrastructure came first, and right afterwards we saw an immediate uptake.

That uptake in cruise ship traffic benefited tour operators, taxi drivers, bus line operators, retail in downtown Victoria and pedicab operators as well as the actual port itself in terms of revenues. That \$2 billion investment in Pier B at Ogden Point translated into a record year of cruise ships, and next year looks to be an even bigger year.

[1115]

I believe we will see the same kind of increase at the Belleville Street terminal if the provincial government, the federal government, municipal governments and the private sector sit at the table together and work out how we can finance the \$16 million project. You will see the same kind of uptake immediately upon completion.

I believe that if we could have the Belleville Street terminal complete two or three years in advance of the Olympics, Victoria will become one of the great tourism draws. In fact, Victoria can become a feeder point for Vancouver, for the Fraser Valley and for the interior. Victoria will be the point of entry for tourists, who will then carry on to other parts of the province, rather than Vancouver always being the point of entry and having people come across the Strait of Georgia.

I am very pleased that the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke has raised the important issue of transportation infrastructure. I will continue to advocate here in Victoria for our key piece in our contribution to doubling tourism by 2015, which is participating as a partner in the redevelopment of the Belleville Street terminal.

**H. Bloy:** I am pleased today to stand and support the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke on transportation needs. In British Columbia we had years of neglect by the former government, years of neglect by the NDP in regards to transportation in this province of ours. The cost to the government of British Columbia... The lack of financial contributions to the infrastructure of British Columbia has cost the government millions upon millions of dollars, and it has cost businesses millions of dollars trying to do business in this province.

One of the things I believe about a government is that government should never run a business, but government should set the rules and the regulations so that business can do business. There's no one better to do business than the entrepreneurial free spirit that we so boldly cherish in this country of ours.

The slow transportation, the moving of goods around this province, has been disastrous for many businesses. Now, with the insight of our Premier and our Minister of Transportation, we're developing and proposing many new roadworks. One of them runs through my riding. It's the doubling of Highway 1 from Vancouver all the way out to the other side of Langley. The twinning of the Port Mann Bridge will continue to move traffic. The ring roads that are being proposed... There's a north ring road that will improve intersections coming from Coquitlam all the way through to the Delta ports. There's a south ring road that will run from Port Kells out to the Delta ports, which will allow transportation to move at a speed that is suitable to everyone else — moving them off of the regular roadways onto a special new highway on the south ring road.

It's the foresight and thought that this province has put into transportation that will deliver our goods and

services faster to our customers and to our customers around the world. On that, I want to say how pleased I am to stand up and support the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke on her improvements and all the effort she's put into bringing infrastructure into her riding. I know that this government is bringing infrastructure into every riding in every area of this province.

**R. Hawes:** I, too, would like to thank the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke for bringing this motion in front of the House and for providing us with an opportunity to speak to this, which I think is one of the most important things we can do to promote a sound economy. That's to build a transportation system that works for goods and for people.

I'm reminded of the opposition party and their objections to the B.C. Rail deal. Some facts that I was not aware of until all of that began to take place and transpire.... I had always thought that Prince Rupert was a more attractive port because it's a day and a half or two days closer to the Orient for shipping. Then I learned that demurrage on railway cars is more expensive than actual time spent on a ship. Most of the people that would ship from the Orient would have preferred Vancouver or even Seattle, because there was less time on a railway car and more time on the ship, which is cheaper. I guess that makes some sense.

[1120]

Then we closed the B.C. Rail Partnership, and suddenly we're a day and a half or two days closer to Chicago, which changes the entire picture. It's an exciting change for the people in the north, and I think it's an exciting change for those who would ship goods into this country and export from this country to and from the Orient. It makes Prince Rupert truly viable and makes the north open right up, and it's all because of transportation.

The folks on the other side, our opposition, don't get that. You know, they have never listened to business, and they have never listened to what makes an economy grow. What does make an economy grow is clearly transportation. Poor transportation costs money — a lot of money. I'm fortunate. I live in the Fraser Valley where I'm only a couple of minutes from my office. Prior to doing the job that I'm doing here, I also worked very close to my home. I've never had to suffer the endless wait, the gridlock that exists going into and out of Vancouver every day for some folks.

The odd time when I have to go into Vancouver early in the morning or if I'm coming back from Victoria and get caught when the traffic jams are still on, I really empathize with those people. I don't know how they live with that day after day, but I do know this. The economic cost for those people and their productivity — when they arrive at work in the morning after sitting in their cars for an hour and a half or more, bumper to bumper, and the stress that's inherent in that — has to be tremendous. There's a tremendous economic toll in terms of the productivity of those people. I'm positive that there must be.

There is also a tremendous toll to be paid in the family lives of those folks as they arrive home at night after the stress of not just a day at work — and for many a very tough day probably — but the perhaps three hours spent in total during the day in bumper-to-bumper traffic. The frustrations inherent in that have to take a toll in family life as well. All of those things, all of those stresses, bear economic consequence.

That's something, it seems to me, that the folks on the other side of the House — our opposition — have never really cared or seemed to think about, because they did nothing about it. Highway 7, where I live — the Lougheed Highway — was upgraded back in the 1980s by the then Social Credit government. There was some work begun. There was a new bridge put in at Ruskin to be part of our highway widening, and it sat there completely unused for years and years. The four-laning that was supposed to take place never happened. There was nothing happening.

Highway 11 between Mission and Abbotsford, which has become not much more than a two-lane goat trail, really, is bumper to bumper every single day. It is not just dangerous but highly frustrating as well. Even for health care purposes, with people having to get back and forth, that has borne a tremendous toll on both communities. As mayor of the city that I live in, I worked with the mayor of Abbotsford to try to get the previous government to do something about Highway 11, because it surely was a priority, and the deaths were mounting. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happened for over a decade.

Mr. Speaker, I can't tell you how proud I am that within months, the four-laning of Highway 11 is going to open. The work is almost completed. There's tremendous progress on that. I also know that at the end of this month or early in November, a tender will be let for the four-laning of a big part of what remains two-lane between Mission and Maple Ridge on the Lougheed Highway.

I know that those kinds of transportation infrastructure improvements are taking place all over the province. We've had the courage to recognize not only the folly of the previous government in ignoring transportation infrastructure for a decade and building the costs.... If you don't fix it when it needs fixing, the costs begin to multiply. They ignored infrastructure for a decade.

[1125]

We had the courage to recognize that something had to be done quickly, so we put the gas tax in place, which while perhaps not popular was politically the right thing to do. With that, we have developed the funding to repair the transportation infrastructure in the province and to actually build new highways and open this province up.

Every step that we're taking — every step.... I see the member from Chilliwack clapping. His area, too, is benefiting from this. With that, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke for bringing this motion, and thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to it.

**D. Hayer:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond to Motion 4 by the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke: "Be it resolved that this House recognize the importance of a sound transportation infrastructure to the economy of British Columbia."

Back in 2003, I presented a similar motion, which was passed by this House. What I said in that motion was that transportation is what drives the economy in this province — be it by ship, air, rail or road. All those areas are interconnected. Without one, another cannot work efficiently.

Solving gridlock and getting commuters and commercial traffic moving is crucial to the economic well-being of my riding of Surrey-Tynehead, all of Surrey and in fact all of British Columbia. Time lost to traffic gridlock translates to over \$1.5 billion lost in this province's economy every year. Commercial and commuter traffic must get moving again.

The infrastructure we use today was built more than 40 years ago. Back then, greater Vancouver had only about 800,000 people, and Surrey was a quiet farming community. Today there are more than 2.5 million people living in the GVRD, and Surrey has more than 400,000 people. These people need to get to work and back to their families. They need to get their commercial goods to and from our valuable ports, and they need to get products moving in a timely and efficient manner throughout the province.

Just one project in my riding, the South Fraser perimeter road, will get the commercial traffic to Delta Port 30 minutes quicker than it gets there now. It alone will move hundreds of trucks off the Port Mann Bridge. We must twin the Port Mann Bridge and widen Highway 1 from Langley to Vancouver and improve all the overpasses in my riding of Surrey-Tynehead, including new overpasses on 156th Street. We also need to improve the traffic flow of commerce and the reconstruction of all overpasses.

Therefore, I support this motion and the action of our Minister of Transportation to improve British Columbia and move British Columbia forward into the future rather than maintain the current traffic infrastructure, which is getting close to half a century old, which costs us \$1.5 billion and growing in lost revenues every year and which takes valuable home time away from the families. I support this motion because it calls for foresight in creating a transportation legacy for generations to come, while the naysayers would have us remain in the past with a stagnant economy.

**Deputy Speaker:** The member for Columbia River-Revelstoke closes debate on Motion 4.

**W. McMahon:** In closing, I was pleased to bring to the House a reminder of the importance of sound transportation infrastructure to the economy of British Columbia. We have heard about the importance of transportation infrastructure as it relates to air quality, our ports, imports and exports, and the movement of goods and services — whether it be by rail, truck or air service. It's an important topic, and I appreciate my

colleagues' support on this motion. With that, I ask that the motion be passed now.

Motion approved.

**Hon. J. Murray:** I call continued debate on Motion 104.

**Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 104 without disturbing the priorities of motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

ANNUAL ALLOWABLE CUT IN  
BEETLE-INFESTED FOREST DISTRICTS  
(continued)

**J. Wilson:** I want to stand here today and support this motion. I think the best way to do this would perhaps be to take everyone here for a little walk through the forest. Due to our time, we may have to run a little bit here.

[1130]

What is a forest? I'd like to describe a typical forest in the Cariboo-Chilcotin and in the Bulkley Valley and in a lot of areas. It's a mix of age, classes and species. The species there are mainly spruce or lodgepole pine and aspen. In the Quesnel forest district, as with a number of other ones like Vanderhoof or Burns Lake, we had approximately 70 years' worth of mature timber to harvest that would see us through into the next rotation. That's why we've had allowable annual cuts. We've managed our forests quite well — until the pine beetle came into the picture.

The other component out there in this forest is that roughly 30 percent of that forest is what we refer to as problem forest type. Those came into being through fires. For the last 50 years, we have controlled the forest fires in British Columbia very well, and we haven't lost a lot of volume to forest fires. Before that, before we managed forest fires, we had lots of them, and when a forest fire occurred, it would burn off an area. That would come back in a re-gen and grow up very thick, and the stand would be too thick to actually mature and be productive.

We do have people harvesting in those areas, though, because once those trees reach a small diameter size — say, on the butt, 20 to 25 centimetres — then we find that some of the value-added companies can utilize that fibre. They've been working in these problem forest types, which is really a good thing. In Quesnel, I can think of one, and that's C&C. They rely entirely on that stratum of wood. The species mix out there in the forest in a lot of these districts is up to 80 percent lodgepole pine.

What happens in a forest that dies? Well, the pine trees there will die. They turn red, and the next year they're grey, because the needles fall off. If those trees

were through a fire, the fire would clean the trees up a little better. It would burn the limbs off. They'll stand for a considerable length of time — maybe 10 or 12 years — because there's not a lot of resistance to the wind. The limbs are gone. It's just a spar standing. When a tree dies from the pine beetle, all the limbs are left on the tree. There's a lot of wind resistance to that tree, and they come down rather quickly. In the area I am familiar with, I am seeing quite an increase in the amount of blowdown in just three years on dead trees.

When our canopy there is.... Let's take an example. Say it's 50 percent pine. When those trees come down, that opens up the canopy, so the other species in the mix are now at the mercy of the elements. It takes the entire forest cover.... Each tree protects each other tree out there. When these trees die and fall down, it opens up areas where the wind can get in. Then it takes out the healthy trees — the spruce, the aspen, the cottonwood. They will come down then, because they don't have the protection they need from the rest of the trees.

Now, the issue we went through.... We had a committee last year, and it was to deal with salvage logging. We cannot harvest all these stands in the next few years. Some of them are going to be left. Some of them are going to be partially lost, but there is going to be a huge demand in the future to go in, in a number of years from now, and salvage the trees that are wind-thrown, that are healthy, that were standing, so that we can extract some of the value from them.

[1135]

When the forest dies, it's not just the trees that it affects. The trees come down, and we end up with a lot of blowdown out there. There's nothing left to control our water. The snow in the spring will melt, and it will run off. It will go into the creeks, and it's gone. The ground dries out, because there's no cover of shade to protect that and hold that moisture in the ground.

Normally, under a healthy forest, that moisture is held and is released slowly through the summer. You get it replenished through precipitation. The cycle moves up and down, but it moves up and down slowly. Without a forest cover, that water comes down, and it's gone. It runs away. You get more drought cycles occurring. We'll see more erosion.

We will see, actually, species that may become endangered, because their primary food source is gone, which could be the lodgepole pine. In the case of the red squirrel, they depend on the pine. The red squirrel is part of the food chain for the marten and so on. When we remove 80 percent of their food supply, we are going to affect other species out there — not we, but the pine beetle has and will.

The other thing that will happen is that a lot of our little tributaries or little creeks that would normally flow year-round, which provide fish habitat, have the potential of drying up, and we're losing that. That's a resource. It's an important resource.

The other thing that happens when a forest dies is that we no longer have a carbon sink. We have a bunch of biomass that is degrading. It's producing methane. It's producing carbon dioxide. It's not healthy for the

environment. A growing forest provides an excellent carbon sink — one of the best carbon sinks that we know of out there today. Globally, that's critical not only to us in this country but to everyone.

There are three types of reforestation, and one I've touched on just slightly. When a fire goes through a pine forest, it cracks the seeds, and you get a huge re-growth very quickly. In most cases, it grows back so thick that it would require a lot of silviculture work, actually, a lot of thinning, in order to bring it into a productive forest type in the time frame we would like to see it happen in. That's how we ended up in the past with about 30 percent of our forests being problem forest types.

The other is that when we harvest, we have silviculture prescriptions. When a company goes in, they harvest a block. They plant those trees, and they do it very well. It's done within a couple of years. It's replanted, and the block is regrowing into a new, healthy forest. That's one of the good things that we've managed, as government, to get down and accomplish out there so that our forests are regenerating on a continual basis.

We harvest and it regenerates. That protects all of the other values out there that we cherish, especially the people who live in the regions. They rely on forestry for their livelihood in a lot of cases, but they also rely on all the other values — the wildlife, all of these things. We plant, and we get a new forest coming back.

There is another way that forests re-gen, and that's called natural re-gen. If you were to harvest a site, the difference between planting it and natural re-gen — especially in the Cariboo — is about four years. A planted forest will come back in four years. It will naturally re-gen anyway, because you have ground disturbance. Anytime you create ground disturbance out there in a forest.... Not anytime — I should correct that. If you get enough snow cover so that you don't get the ground disturbance when you're in there with machinery working, then you won't get it.

[1140]

If the snow cover is minimal or if there is no snow cover, when you're out there harvesting, you're creating ground disturbance, and that ground disturbance creates natural re-gen. That natural re-gen in many cases comes back. It's spaced just about as well as we would space it if we planted it. The only difference between planting it is that we gain four years.

Those trees are coming up. They're healthy. They're growing. By other things we do, it creates a little better growth. Then the natural re-gen kicks in. But by that time, the trees we've planted have reached a point where they are sort of in command out there, and the other stuff that comes up is trying to.... They're way under the canopy at that point, so they have a problem encroaching on the trees that were planted. Under natural re-gen, it's a little longer, and in a lot of cases, the re-gen is maybe not 100 percent as good as if it was planted — but it is almost.

Now, when you look at all of this fibre, can we re-plant it? We would like some help from the federal government. We would like all the help we can get to

get our forests back and healthy, to protect our streams and wildlife and to protect our environment by having a good carbon sink out there.

The economics in this.... A lot of people look at it as if it's all economics. Economics play an important part, but to me, as just a citizen who lives in the region, the other values out there are almost equally as important as the economic factor in this. That is, we get a ground cover, we conserve our water, we keep our streams alive and active, we provide a habitat for the wildlife that we all cherish, and they will have a forest to live in that's actually growing and healthy.

Now, it is imperative that we move on this as quickly as we can. We need to harvest as much of this fibre.... Whatever purpose it goes to, it needs to be done for all of the reasons I have pointed out here today. With that, I am going to support this motion 100 percent and hope that we can take up this challenge and meet it head on and accomplish what we want to do.

**Deputy Speaker:** The member for Cariboo South closes debate.

**W. Cobb:** This issue is important and critical to my constituents — as a matter of fact, to all constituents in B.C. Motion 104, to encourage the government to address the problem of the mountain pine beetle, is one of the few ways we can effectively do so — remove infested trees from the forest. When the NDP government was in power, they decided to appease their environmental friends by doing nothing about the problem. They hoped that the long cold spell would kill the beetles. Well, this strategy was not effective, and their failure to act has allowed the pine beetle to destroy trees all over the province and decimate some of our most beautiful parks, like Tweedsmuir and Manning Park.

Our government has taken many steps to combat the mountain pine beetle epidemic, but this infestation continues to grow. It has expanded from approximately 165,000 hectares in 1999 to about 4.2 million hectares in 2003, and it's still growing. The mountain pine beetle in B.C. now ranges from Fort St. James in the north to Manning Park, located near Hope and Princeton, in the south; from Cranbrook in the east to Houston in the west. Research has indicated that the current infestation may peak in 2008 under current conditions, but it has the potential to kill 80 percent of the merchantable timber, pine timber, in B.C.'s interior. Some areas have already been hit as high as 80 percent.

[1145]

The pine beetle epidemic has impacted the livelihood of 25,000 families in B.C. Many of my constituents depend on the forest industry to provide for their families. Provincewide, forestry is still the number one industry. We must remove the dead trees to return our forest to a healthy position. I move the motion.

Motion approved.

**Hon. J. Murray:** I call continued debate on Motion 116.

**Deputy Speaker:** Hon. members, pursuant to standing orders, unanimous consent of the House is required to proceed with Motion 116 without disturbing the priorities of the motions preceding it on the order paper.

Leave granted.

#### RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS (continued)

**B. Penner:** It's an honour for me to have an opportunity to close debate on Motion 116, which I think is an important one, signalling the Legislature's support for new power projects in British Columbia that are environmentally responsible.

As I noted in my comments last week, however, there are still people out there that don't support some of the projects that we've seen going forward in British Columbia. Foremost among the opponents is a group known as the B.C. Citizens for Public Power.

I notice that late last week they issued a news release complaining that members of this Legislature, including myself, have spoken out about this group and have highlighted the fact that they appear to be nothing more than a well-funded but poorly disguised front for the NDP. I made that comment and observation, as have many others — including Mike Smyth, a columnist with the *Province* newspaper — who have pointed out that their board of directors is largely dominated by people with well-established NDP links, including former NDP Members of Parliament or failed NDP candidates or people involved with NDP riding associations, as well as Jim Sinclair, the Federation of Labour president here in British Columbia, who is working very hard in the Surrey-Panorama Ridge by-election to elect the NDP.

Late last week, this group put out a news release. What's interesting about it — it's dated October 21 — is that nowhere do they actually deny they are closely affiliated with the NDP.

In the last paragraph they make a comment here, and they say a couple of things which are inaccurate. Rhetorically, the executive director of that group, Mark Veerkamp, who by the way used to work for the Canadian Union of Public Employees at a time when that union donated thousands of dollars to the NDP leadership campaign for Carole James, asks: "Where exactly do we have it wrong?" That's the last sentence in the news release.

Right before that, he makes a claim that all future power production in British Columbia is being turned over to the private sector. You didn't have to look very far to see where they have it wrong, because that's fundamentally untrue.

If you only go so far as to read our energy plan, which was released in November 2002, you'll find that B.C. Hydro is permitted and encouraged to undertake upgrades to existing facilities, to squeeze more power out of their facilities. As well, on page 30, the potential for Site C dam is explicitly recognized. There's a nota-

tion that... In fact, I'll read it here: "Any proposed new B.C. hydroelectric facility such as the Peace Site C must be brought to cabinet for approval before being considered by the Utilities Commission as a source of supply." There's an explicit acknowledgment that B.C. Hydro does and will continue to generate electricity, not just through their existing facilities but through expanded facilities.

In fact, if you take a look at B.C. Hydro's most recent quarterly report, released just last week for the second quarter of this year, on page 25 it notes that this year alone, they have a target of increasing their power output by 104 gigawatt-hours through their Resource Smart program. That's the program that B.C. Hydro has for improving existing facilities and squeezing more energy out of those facilities. I note parenthetically here that the 104 gigawatt-hours is enough electricity on an annual basis to keep 10,400 homes with their lights on — more than 10,000 homes with their lights on.

Citizens for Public Power, in their partisan zeal, tend to overlook that fact. Again, I think that just highlights what their real agenda is. It certainly isn't to shed the light on what's happening in British Columbia in terms of electricity.

In addition, it's part of B.C. Hydro's capital plan going forward to expand the existing Revelstoke and Mica dams to allow for the installation of two new generators in each of those two dams. A total of four new large turbines are contemplated that will require significant transmission upgrades by B.C. Transmission Corporation. That will be challenging, I'm sure, but that is the plan going forward to generate more electricity from our existing B.C. Hydro facilities. As well, of course, B.C. Hydro has been contemplating the potential for site C, and I know that the B.C. Utilities Commission will have something more to say about that.

[1150]

I also note, of course, that this group, the Citizens for Public Power, never complained about the previous government, the NDP government, doing deals with private power generators. As exhibit A, I point to the Island Cogeneration plant in Campbell River. The contract was signed, and that project went ahead and got built in the late 1990s in Campbell River. That project, I believe, is owned by Calpine Corp., a U.S.-owned multinational power company.

Did the Citizens for Public Power complain or say that that was a bad thing? No. Maybe it was because it was done by an NDP government. Again, I say that this is further evidence that this group is very selective in their facts, and I think it's because of their partisan leanings. They're not going to criticize the party that they're trying to get elected. Again, I think it highlights that Citizens for Public Power is really nothing more than an NDP front.

Instead, what this group seems to be complaining about are the new projects that have been going ahead under our government. Let me just rattle off what a few of these projects are, projects such as the Hartland

Landfill, built by Maxim Power Corp. in Victoria. It captures — I mentioned this last week — escaping methane gas from the landfill. Now, what could be wrong with that? Instead of having this gas escape into the atmosphere and perhaps contribute to global warming, that gas is captured, and it's put through a thermal processor. The steam that's created from the heat turns a turbine and generates electricity for people here on Vancouver Island. Similarly, there's an almost identical project, only larger in scale, in the greater Vancouver landfill on the mainland — again, another project that went ahead following 2001.

There's the Miller Creek small hydro project, the Brandywine Creek small hydro project and the Furry Creek small hydro project right above the golf course, if you've ever gone there on your way to Squamish on the lower mainland. There's the Raging River small hydro project in Port Alice on northern Vancouver Island; the Rutherford Creek project near Pemberton; Meares Creek small hydro project in Gold River, also on Vancouver Island; the SEEgen Montenay Burnaby incinerator project, again utilizing what would otherwise be garbage or considered waste for a beneficial purpose — that is, to create electricity that we need in this province.

The Mamquam River project is now under construction by Can Hydro. That's the Upper Mamquam project. The Armstrong wood waste co-gen project has come on line in Armstrong. That's generating 20 megawatts of electricity from wood waste. There's the Hystad Creek hydro project near Valemount, generating six megawatts of renewable electricity from water, and of course, there's the Pingston Creek project, which I talked about a bit last week, developed by Canadian Hydro Developers — based near that project near Revelstoke, a 45 megawatt project.

What is it that B.C. Citizens for Public Power has against those projects? Those projects collectively are generating in excess of 923 gigawatt hours of electricity annually. That's enough for 92,000 homes. Is Citizens for Public Power saying that 92,000 homes in British Columbia should go without electricity? Or are they saying that the people that had good-paying jobs during the construction of those projects shouldn't have had those jobs? Or is Citizens for Public Power saying that the province shouldn't get the revenue that those projects pay in taxes? Just two projects alone, two of these projects I've mentioned — Rutherford Creek and Pingston Creek — combined pay in excess of \$1.5 million per year to various forms of government in the forms of water licence rentals, income taxes, property taxes.

Is Citizens for Public Power saying the province shouldn't be receiving that \$1.5 million per year in revenue? I think it's absurd, and their selective criticism highlights that in fact they are an NDP front. They're very partisan. They're out there in the Surrey by-election. They've got their signs up. They look just like any other political lawn sign, exactly the same shape, probably coming from the same plant that makes the NDP signs. On them it says, "The power is

yours," borrowing — or should we say stealing? — the slogan from B.C. Hydro. I pause to wonder whether or not B.C. Hydro has some kind of trademark right over that slogan, which has now been appropriated by Citizens for Public Power. They're out there in a very partisan way engaging in misinformation.

[1155]

I want to pause, lastly, and say that this morning, while perusing the Citizens for Public Power website, I came across a document complaining about and raising the bogeyman spectre of regional transmission organizations. This is something that they tried to get some traction on over a year ago and failed, because their then spokesperson, Marjorie Griffin Cohen, who had been a NDP appointment to the B.C. Hydro board of directors, was actually on that board of directors when B.C. Hydro decided in the nineties to pursue discussions about joining an RTO. Then she was out there publicly a year ago saying this was a bad idea. Yet when she was on the board of directors for B.C. Hydro, she did not vote against B.C. Hydro pursuing discussions to possibly join a regional transmission organization.

What I did find on their website today is a document that raises the spectre of concerns around RTOs — an abbreviation for regional transmission organizations — and then points favourably at Manitoba Hydro and how they've been able to obtain 42 percent of their energy sales from exports and how they've signed a ten-year deal worth \$1.7 billion to export power to Minnesota.

Manitoba Hydro is different, in one important respect, from B.C. Hydro. Manitoba Hydro has actually joined a regional transmission organization. They did so under an NDP government in Manitoba. It's called the Midwest Independent System Operator, or MISO for short. It's through the auspices of that organization that Manitoba Hydro is enjoying considerable export sales.

On the one hand, Citizens for Public Power is saying, "That's great. Look at Manitoba. They're exporting power and making money," and on the other hand, they're saying that regional transmission organizations are bad. Yet that's exactly what's facilitating the sales that Manitoba Hydro is currently enjoying — selling it to the Midwest energy market.

The hypocrisy is unbelievable — it's breathtaking — on the part of Citizens for Public Power. They criticize this concept of regional transmission organizations.

I'll just close by noting that in October of 2000, B.C. Hydro filed a document with FERC, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, in the United States. This

is what they had to say about the potential for benefits of participating in regional transmission organizations.

"B.C. Hydro's participation in RTO development in the Pacific Northwest will clearly further the commission's objectives in order No. 2000, that there be a seamless wholesale transmission service throughout the region and that the region served be of the broadest possible scope."

Then further it says:

"Further to that objective, B.C. Hydro has committed extensive internal and external resources to the RTO West process. Over the course of the past several months, officers and employees of B.C. Hydro and its subsidiary Powerex Corporation, as well as outside consultants and experts engaged by both companies, have participated in numerous working groups to establish a workable RTO framework in the Pacific Northwest."

That was October 2000, when the NDP was in office. The board of directors of B.C. Hydro included Jim Sinclair, president of the B.C. Federation of Labour and now a director of Citizens for Public Power. That luminary, former NDP MLA Erda Walsh, from East Kootenay, was part of the B.C. Hydro board of directors when they were going on at length about what a good concept it was to try and create a seamless trading organization on the west coast.

Now, people who have been following this discussion will know that there's still been no final agreement about an RTO-type structure. In fact, now I think they've changed.... The working title or name is now Gridwest. Talks are ongoing. There has been no final agreement. B.C. Hydro is keeping a watching brief and participating in the talks to see if it's in British Columbia's interest to ink a deal. No final decision has been made on that.

It's just interesting to note all the contradictions and inconsistencies put out by this group known as Citizens for Public Power. With that, Mr. Speaker, I ask that the House support this motion calling for new generation, new supplies of electricity, to help make British Columbia self-sufficient in electricity once again.

Motion approved.

Hon. J. Murray moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 12 p.m.