



6th Session, 37th Parliament

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
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(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

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**6TH SESSION, 37TH PARLIAMENT**

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## CONTENTS

Tuesday, March 8, 2005  
Afternoon Sitting

### Routine Proceedings

	<b>Page</b>
Introductions by Members .....	12375
Introduction and First Reading of Bills.....	12375
University of Victoria Foundation Act (Bill Pr401)	
J. Bray	
Confirmation of Personal Ownership of DNA Act (Bill M202)	
J. Bray	
Westco Insurance Company Act, 1966 Repeal Act, 2005 (Bill Pr404)	
R. Sultan	
Pacific Bible College Amendment Act, 2005 (Bill Pr402)	
R. Stewart	
Statements (Standing Order 25B) .....	12376
Equality for women	
V. Roddick	
Rosemary Brown	
J. Kwan	
Women of Excellence Awards	
K. Whittred	
Oral Questions.....	12377
Comments of child advocates on child protection services	
J. MacPhail	
Hon. C. Hansen	
J. Kwan	
Hon. G. Bruce	
J. Brar	
Hon. M. Coell	
Government support for mining industry	
D. MacKay	
Hon. P. Bell	
Comments of child advocates on services for children and families	
J. Kwan	
Hon. M. Coell	
Second Reading of Bills.....	12380
Supply Act (No. 1), 2005 (Bill 20) ( <i>continued</i> )	
J. MacPhail	
J. Kwan	
J. Brar	
R. Sultan	



TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2005

The House met at 2:04 p.m.

### Introductions by Members

**Hon. J. Les:** On behalf of my colleague the Attorney General, it gives me great pleasure to welcome a class of grades 5 and 6 students here this afternoon from the Homma School in Richmond. They are here together with their teachers, Mr. Don Allison and Mr. Robert Kwan. I bid the House make them welcome.

**J. MacPhail:** It gives me great pleasure to welcome two friends to the Legislature. They think this is a special week, so they've come to join us. My two very great friends are Miriam Gropper and David Whiteley. Would the House please make them welcome.

[1405]

**V. Roddick:** In the gallery today is Alex Copeland, the chairman of the board for the Delta Credit Union — or Envision, as it is now known. He is also president of our Delta Chamber of Commerce. He's accompanied by his wife, Gerry. Will the House please make them warmly welcome.

**L. Mayencourt:** It's a pleasure to introduce two good friends of mine, Mr. Blaine Culling and Mr. Vance Campbell. Both of these guys were the architects of the rejuvenation of the Granville Street entertainment zone. They've been great friends and great supporters. Would the House please make them both welcome.

**B. Kerr:** I would like to introduce Cathy Basskin to the House. She's a mother of two. She's a former teacher, a director of Tourism Cowichan, a director of the South Cowichan Chamber of Commerce, but most importantly, she's going to be my successor as the next Liberal to represent the good people of Malahat-Juan de Fuca.

**R. Stewart:** It's my pleasure to introduce a friend of mine. Diane Tremblay is the director general of the Société francophone de Victoria and is related in some way to someone who's sitting at the Clerks' table. As well, there's Mary MacDougall, former procedural clerk, the House of Commons in Ottawa, and a friend of theirs from Ottawa, Carolyn St. Denis. Would the House please make them welcome.

**Hon. M. Coell:** I have two guests in the Legislature today, a very longtime friend of mine, Gary Choo, who's a teacher, and with him is one of his students, Kurtis Wong. Would the House please make them welcome.

**Hon. I. Chong:** On behalf of the member for Burquitlam I would like to introduce today a number of students from the advanced economic and manage-

ment training program studying here at SFU's learning strategies group. They're from Heilongjiang, China. They're also accompanied by Tom Brown. There are 32 of these individuals, and I believe they are meeting with a number of MLAs later today. I ask the House to please make them all very welcome.

### Introduction and First Reading of Bills

#### UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA FOUNDATION ACT

J. Bray presented a bill intituled University of Victoria Foundation Act.

**J. Bray:** I move that a bill intituled University of Victoria Foundation Act, of which notice has been given on the order paper, be introduced and now read a first time.

Motion approved.

**J. Bray:** I move that the bill be referred to the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders and Private Bills.

Bill Pr401 introduced, read a first time and referred to the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders and Private Bills.

#### CONFIRMATION OF PERSONAL OWNERSHIP OF DNA ACT

J. Bray presented a bill intituled Confirmation of Personal Ownership of DNA Act.

**J. Bray:** I move that a bill intituled Confirmation of Personal Ownership of DNA Act, of which notice has been given in my name on the order paper, be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

**J. Bray:** British Columbia is becoming one of the world's leading centres of research into the human genome. From the breaking of our human genetic code to the fast-track development of SARS vaccines, to breakthrough cancer treatment tailored to one's own genetic makeup, the fast-changing world of genomics is presenting our society with unlimited possibilities. It also creates the need for legislatures and the public to look out into the future and anticipate what safeguards may be needed to ensure a positive use of this new technology.

I believe it is time that we establish in law a basic tenet that one's own DNA is in fact their personal property. This is not meant to change how we use DNA sequences — how the police or the courts currently use DNA to protect society, solve crimes or

search for missing persons — but rather to establish in law a basic platform that protects individuals and their unique genetic makeup.

I believe we must engage on a national scale in the discussion about how we ensure this new technology we derive from genomics is continually managed in an ethical way. I am proud of this government's commitment to life sciences, and I am also committed to ensuring that we as legislators provide public confidence in the protection of their unique genetic identity.

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

Bill M202 introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

WESTCO INSURANCE COMPANY ACT, 1966  
REPEAL ACT, 2005

R. Sultan presented a bill intituled Westco Insurance Company Act, 1966 Repeal Act, 2005.

**R. Sultan:** I move that a bill intituled Westco Insurance Company Act, 1966 Repeal Act, 2005, of which notice has been given on the order paper, be introduced and now read a first time.

Motion approved.

[1410]

**R. Sultan:** I move that the bill be referred to the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders and Private Bills.

Bill Pr404 introduced, read a first time and referred to the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders and Private Bills.

PACIFIC BIBLE COLLEGE  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2005

R. Stewart presented a bill intituled Pacific Bible College Amendment Act, 2005.

**R. Stewart:** I move that a bill intituled Pacific Bible College Amendment Act, 2005, of which notice has been given on the order paper, be introduced and read a first time now.

Motion approved.

**R. Stewart:** Pacific Bible College has served our communities very well since 1972 when it started in a Vancouver church basement with 35 students and seven teachers. In 1979 they purchased the Surrey facilities of Vancouver Bible College. Pacific became known for its campus environment and programming options for young people, such as Life Launch.

Life Bible College of Canada was founded in 1928 in the heart of Vancouver, operating out of various church basements and facilities of their own in Vancouver, Surrey and Burnaby. Life Canada has been developing ministers and leaders, primarily for Four-square Churches in Canada.

In 1997 these two colleges, with a common purpose and complementary strengths, joined forces. Together they provide a strong central campus in Surrey with extension programs that reach around the world. They are an interdenominational college affiliated with a denominational network of ministry opportunities. This bill acknowledges that Pacific Bible College and Life Bible College will now be serving their students and faith communities together under a new name: Pacific Life Bible College.

I move that the bill be referred to the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders and Private Bills.

Bill Pr402 introduced, read a first time and referred to the Select Standing Committee on Parliamentary Reform, Ethical Conduct, Standing Orders and Private Bills.

**Statements  
(Standing Order 25B)**

EQUALITY FOR WOMEN

**V. Roddick:** Eve. Helen of Troy. Cleopatra. Queen of Sheba. Elizabeth I. Evangeline. Queen Elizabeth II. Mrs. Gandhi. Maggie Thatcher. April Glassby, a school friend from Vancouver who was the American ambassador in Iraq in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. All are great women who helped shape the world we live in.

I am honoured to rise and remind everyone that today, March 8, is International Women's Day. This day was established by the United Nations in 1997. However, women and their influence in society obviously go back to the very beginning of time. Throughout history, women have contributed enormously to the evolution of modern life — some more than others.

The issue that interests me in today's world is that we're still striving towards a level playing field. Queen Elizabeth I actually had the power to behead her enemies. We women today may have the vote, but we still have problems getting business loans and mortgages. We often find ourselves sandwiched between our occupation and our family responsibilities, but we're making it work — literally.

The female labour force is at an all-time high at just over 60 percent. Of the approximately 2,000 new jobs created in this province since December 2001, 42 percent went to women. Of those, 89 percent were full-time jobs. Women run 36 percent of our small businesses around B.C. — the highest rate in Canada. Although true equality is still not a 100 percent reality, awareness will certainly help towards attaining this goal in the decades to come.

## ROSEMARY BROWN

**J. Kwan:** Yes, today is International Women's Day. International Women's Day gives us the opportunity to reflect on the past and celebrate the gains that women have made towards political, social and economic equality.

Today I would like to celebrate the life of Rosemary Brown, a woman who worked diligently as an activist, educator and role model to promote the rights of both women and minorities in this province and abroad. Amongst her many achievements, Rosemary ran and won as an NDP candidate in the riding of Vancouver-Burrard in 1972. She was the first black woman ever elected to a Canadian legislature and remained in that position for 14 years.

[1415]

She was once quoted as saying: "Women should enter politics to bring about change." This was advice that she certainly lived by. During her time in this House, she always made sure that underrepresented voices in our province got their say. She created a committee to eliminate sexism in textbooks and educational curricula. She was instrumental in establishing the Berger commission on the family and introducing legislation which would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex and marital status. Her efforts contributed directly to an increase in the number of women represented on boards, commissions and directorates.

Sadly, Rosemary Brown passed away at the age of 72 in 2003. Today, in honour of her remarkable achievements, a park in Kitsilano will be officially named the Rosemary Brown Park. Also, Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor of B.C. will present the inaugural Rosemary Brown Award for Women. This year's recipient, Ms. Barbara Binns, is being recognized for her outstanding work in the area of women's equality.

As important as it is to reflect on the successes of the past, the purpose of International Women's Day is also to assess the challenges facing women in contemporary society and to look towards the future. In the past four years we have seen the plight of women in this province ignored.

Instead of continuing the work of innovators like Rosemary Brown, this government has chosen to cut the very services and programs that ensure women's rights are protected. This government has scrapped universal day care, slashed legal aid by 40 percent, gotten rid of Canada's first and only Ministry of Women's Equality, eliminated funding for B.C. women's centres, ended the zero-tolerance policy on domestic violence, abolished the B.C. Human Rights Commission and has been chastised by the United Nations on the elimination of discrimination against women.

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

**J. Kwan:** This government's record on women is alarming, reminding us...

**Mr. Speaker:** Thank you.

**J. Kwan:** ...that the hard-won rights and freedoms of the past could easily be eroded and must not be taken for granted.

## WOMEN OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

**K. Whittred:** Yesterday my community celebrated International Women's Day with the first annual Women of Excellence Awards, sponsored by the *North Shore Outlook*. The accomplishments of five North Shore women — women in business, sports, arts, youth and community — were celebrated.

In the youth category the award went to a young woman who will graduate grade 12 this June. Liz Henden has a curriculum vitae that makes you tired just reading it. What I really want to share with you is an excerpt from her composition, *Why I Volunteer*. Liz writes: "I can't imagine what my life would be like without giving back to my community. Whether it's through coaching my under-eight field hockey team, teaching a course at the community centre, organizing a youth event to raise money for the North Shore concurrent disorders clinic or working in the kitchen at camp, giving back to my community fills me with a sense of pride and self-confidence."

The other award I want to celebrate is from the sports category. Olga Kotelko plays second base for the North Shore slow-pitch and competes in track and field in sprint, jumps and throws. So far, she has amassed an astonishing 432 medals — 401 gold — and has received numerous world, Canadian and B.C. records and trophies while competing both locally and internationally. She is B.C.'s female track-and-field athlete of the year for 2004. She's a member of the Optimists Club and helps in bike and helmet safety programs. She teaches shot put. Olga started her sporting career at age 70 and continues to inspire local athletes at 85.

These are two women, aged 17 and 85, who are inspirational role models for each and every one of us.

[1420]

## Oral Questions

COMMENTS OF CHILD ADVOCATES  
ON CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES

**J. MacPhail:** Nine months ago three prominent British Columbians with a wealth of experience on child welfare issues — former child, youth and family advocate Joyce Preston; former B.C. children's commissioner Cynthia Morton; and former ombudsperson Dulcie McCallum — wrote to the Premier to express serious concerns about the state of child protection under his government. The letter is dated June of 2004. In the spirit of cooperation, in this letter they offered to meet with the Premier to discuss their concerns personally and confidentially. Can anyone in the government explain why the Premier never even responded to them?

**Hon. C. Hansen:** I do not know the specific answer to the member's question. We can certainly endeavour

to find out the status of that correspondence. They're certainly individuals who have made a great contribution to British Columbia in terms of public policy over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I can inform the member that we are strengthening services for children in British Columbia. In Budget 2005 there is an additional \$241 million going into those services over the coming three years, because we do want to continue to make sure those programs are strengthened.

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

**J. MacPhail:** These three women are some of the most important advocates for children in Canada. They're well aware of this government's record. When child welfare experts of this calibre say that the public's trust in the child protection system is at stake, owing to budget cuts of the last three and a half years and the elimination of independent offices to protect children, the Premier has a moral responsibility to listen even if he disagrees.

Again to the government: why would the Premier let the concerns of these prominent British Columbians sit on his desk for nine months with no answer? Does the government not even care what they have to say?

**Hon. C. Hansen:** I know that the Minister of Children and Family Development takes these interests very seriously. He is passionate about wanting to protect and enhance services for children in British Columbia. Over the last number of years we have sought ways we can eliminate duplication of services that are at the administrative level so that dollars can be freed up to be directed directly into programs that meet the needs of children and families at the community level. I know that he will continue to do that.

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

**J. MacPhail:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that answer is shameful, given what these three prominent British Columbians have said about this government's record. In their letter of June 2004, these experts expressed serious reservations about the lack of public accountability in the child welfare system. All three point out that the government's child advocate has "absolutely no independent powers based on complaints received on its own initiative."

That is what this government did to child protection. I ask the question again, because I have not heard a straight answer. As their letter says, the legacy of children like Matthew Vaudreuil deserves an answer, and I agree with that.

Again to the government: why would this government, particularly this Premier, choose to ignore this criticism and not bother to respond, even if it is just to defend the actions of the government? Why the silence?

**Hon. C. Hansen:** I know that the minister responsible takes these issues seriously. He has meetings with individuals around the province who do have expertise that they can contribute. We take that information very seriously, and programs are developed. As I mentioned earlier, we are going to be expanding funding for programs for children in this province by \$241 million over the three years of this budget.

[1425]

**J. Kwan:** I don't know why this government is deferring what they're doing. The former independent watchdogs are saying to this government that what they're doing is not good enough. I quote from their press release today: "During the past few years, however, the public awareness and public accountability have been severely restricted. B.C. has lost a child, youth and family advocate; the children's commission; and the child and youth team from the ombudsman's office. We believe the replacement for these offices is inadequate."

If the Premier read the letter, he would know that the reason why these advocates were compelled to express their concerns is for two specific cases: the death of Kayla and the critical injuries of twins in the lower mainland. As a result of the government's elimination of these independent watchdogs, there is no longer a transparent process to investigate tragic cases like these. This is the Premier who promised transparency and open government, but all the promises the Premier has made have been broken, and the betrayal of at-risk children...

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**J. Kwan:** ...is the most shameful aspect of it.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the government.... If Patrick Kinsella wrote on behalf of Alcan, something tells me that they would actually get an immediate response. Why do independent voices standing up for children get the brush-off while big corporate donors get the instant attention?

**Hon. C. Hansen:** As I mentioned earlier, I know that the Minister of Children and Family Development meets regularly with individuals around the province who are advocating for that. We have developed programs over the last number of years to make sure that families are supported and that fewer children have to go into the care of the government — the kind of supports that are being put in at the community level to make sure that families can stay united with the support of those programs.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Vancouver–Mount Pleasant has a supplementary question.

**J. Kwan:** The letter was sent to the Premier as far back as June 16, 2004, and to date, they have received

no response. The Premier promised to protect children and to direct new resources to that task, but he's cut the budget for at-risk kids by millions. He's eliminated independent watchdogs for children, and now he's just ignoring them. In frustration, these welfare experts have made their concerns public today, releasing a statement along with the June 14 letter.

Can the government tell us if the government takes their concerns seriously, or do the Liberals consider Ms. Preston, Ms. McCallum and Ms. Morton just one more special interest group that they can ignore — people who are advocating on behalf of children, the most vulnerable people in our society?

**Hon. G. Bruce:** This government takes the care and well-being of children very, very seriously. Because of that...

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. G. Bruce:** ...today there are fewer children in the care of government in the history of this province. Secondly....

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. G. Bruce:** Secondly, as the opposition might like to know, this government has embarked upon a very aggressive program of making sure our children are properly cared for. We're making sure that they have dental, that they have sight testing, that they have....

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. G. Bruce:** They have sight testing before they get into school, for grade 6. All of these things....

**J. MacPhail:** Sight testing. Well, that'll make them feel better.

**Hon. G. Bruce:** Absolutely.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

**Hon. G. Bruce:** All of these things are so that children can be well looked after, so that they go through the educational system and have a chance to grow and to flourish. What we've done in these last few years is bring about a situation so that children are properly looked after...

Interjection.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

**Hon. G. Bruce:** ...in British Columbia.

**J. Brar:** In their statement these experts say that without accountability in the system, the public cannot know if there hasn't been another tragic case like the one of Matthew Vaudreuil. How can this government pretend that this government has kept its promises to children when the former children's commissioner, the former ombudsman and the former child, youth and family advocate say that these promises have been broken?

**Hon. M. Coell:** This government's goal is to reduce the number of children in care and to preserve a family model for care. There are approximately 9,000 children in care in B.C. That's down 15 percent since 2001.

[1430]

By providing mediation, alternative dispute resolutions and supports to families, we've been able to keep families together. We'll continue to do that.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member for Surrey-Panorama Ridge has a supplementary question.

**J. Brar:** Let me quote again from the statement released today — just today: "We are today calling upon the Premier to address these concerns now rather than wait for another crisis to break in the media through public outcry. What he has promised in 2001: real accountability." After nine long months of ignoring these concerns, will this government agree today to sit down — just sit down — with Ms. Preston, Ms. Morton and Ms. McCallum at least to hear what they have to say?

**Hon. M. Coell:** It was the NDP government's policy to take children from their homes and ask questions later. Mr. Speaker...

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

**Hon. M. Coell:** ...under their government there was a rapid increase in the number of children in care — a rapid increase in the number of children in care.

Interjections.

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

**Hon. M. Coell:** This government's approach has been able to help families, to keep families together, and we'll continue to provide those supports to keep families together.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT  
FOR MINING INDUSTRY

**D. MacKay:** I have a question for the Minister of State for Mining.

Mining used to be a great economic contributor to the northwest part of our province. In the nineties the mining industry left our province. They left because of the administration that was in this government before we came here. Recently the mining industry has made a resurgence in the northwest part of our province, and our people up there are looking at the mining industry for employment opportunities.

The Fraser Institute just released its mining report and said that B.C. has finally come out of No. 10 in our country, but it also said we had room for improvement. We have room to improve the mining industry in our province. So I'd like to ask the minister of state what he's doing to ensure that British Columbia remains centre stage for the mining industry in our province?

**Hon. P. Bell:** The member points out quite rightly that this survey was done some time ago. There have been some significant steps as it relates to mining. In fact, in the last 60 days we have introduced a new mining plan for British Columbia. In the last 60 days we have implemented a new \$25 million fund for geoscience, and in the last 60 days we have also introduced something called *Mineral Titles Online*.

Interjections.

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

**Hon. P. Bell:** Let me tell you what this government will not do. We will not stand by while one out of every two jobs disappeared through the 1990s. We will not stand by when, for every one mine that opened, two closed. And we won't stand by when exploration dropped from 12 percent of the national average to just 6 percent. But let me quote something from the report. In fact, the report said: "A bad reputation lasts a long time. British Columbia has made real efforts to reform, but companies need to have confidence that a good policy climate when they start exploration will be in place when the mine enters production in the future." Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, that after May 17, 2005 they will have that confidence in this province.

#### COMMENTS OF CHILD ADVOCATES ON SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**J. Kwan:** These advocates write:

"How will government report publicly on maintaining, if not enhancing, the health and safety of children while the budget has reduced its services to children and families? We have examined the service outcomes of the ministry and are unable to see transparent measures that address these matters. This is inconsistent with the commitment that the Premier has made publicly to hold all ministries to account for quality outcomes."

If the government is so proud of what they're doing, if the government stands by their record — and they say that everything they have done to date pro-

TECTS children and their families — then I would like to ask the minister and this government this question: are they saying that these respected advocates are wrong, that they don't know what they're talking about? Or should we trust this government that has cut budgets for children and families and stopped providing the reassurance and transparency in ensuring that children and families get the protection they need?

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please.

[1435]

**Hon. M. Coell:** I think the Minister of Finance mentioned that there was an increase in the budget for Children and Family Development. Our government reviewed across government. Following our review, we established an independent child and youth officer with a clear role to consolidate all the aspects of the previous commissioner and the youth advocate.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Order, please. Order, please.

**Hon. M. Coell:** The child and youth officer is an independent advocate. The officer is legislatively mandated to comment publicly on issues affecting children and youth and to identify where we're doing a good job and where we can do a better job. We'll continue to do that.

[End of question period.]

#### Orders of the Day

**Hon. G. Bruce:** I call continuation of second reading of Bill 20 on interim supply.

#### Second Reading of Bills

SUPPLY ACT (No. 1), 2005  
(continued)

**J. MacPhail:** To refresh the memory of those in this chamber — and they, believe you me, need their memories refreshed — but more importantly the public, we are debating what is called "interim supply" in the parliamentary system.

This is Bill 20. What this government has done, unlike any previous government, is give themselves by this legislation, *carte blanche*, one-half of an entire year's budget to spend as they see fit without public scrutiny.

I went to the legislative library, along with our interns, and examined the history behind what parliament's role is in these matters of awarding public expenditure through interim supply. It actually might be important for everybody. This history lesson was very interesting for me as well. The idea of interim supply

and debating the taking of taxes from citizens started in the year 1295. That parliament declared: "What touches all should be approved by all." That was the premise of the foundation of the British parliamentary system.

It went on to say that the assembly, the parliament, has the right to deny the amounts requested or to reduce a budget if it sees fit, and only parliament has that right. It was called back then "grievance before supply." In other words, the elected representatives would stand up and bring forward the grievances of their citizens, of their constituents, before the government was supplied with the right to spend. That dates back to the beginning of parliament. Why was that put in place? Why was that important premise put in place? Because prior to that time, the unelected king had control of the purse strings, and the citizens of the day said that was wrong. They wrested control of the purse strings from the king and set up parliament.

[1440]

The concept of interim supply is a very interesting concept. It in no way is meant to give carte blanche for a full half-year of spending for a government to do with it what it would wish. The interim supply does not constitute approval carte blanche.

Let me just show you exactly what interim supply....

Interjections.

**J. MacPhail:** You know, Mr. Speaker, some people actually would know when it is time to retire, and others sit there and make others bear the brunt of their longstanding, insufferable presence. I would just hope that some members of the Legislature who don't get that concept would have the ability at least to keep quiet.

Here's what the concept of interim supply is about. This is from Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules*: "Interim supply provides the government with the money to meet its obligations during the time before the main estimates are approved." Well, Mr. Speaker, we actually have weeks and weeks to go before this fiscal year even ends — before there is even a requirement for interim supply, let alone for the period of time that still remains in this thirty-seventh parliament — so it's bizarre that we're doing a bill for interim supply. It goes against the very foundation of the British parliamentary system.

Let's go on. What else does Beauchesne say? "Interim supply is normally requested in the first supply period for the three months of the new fiscal year for all departments of government." We're still in the old fiscal year. We're in the old fiscal year. It doesn't expire for three weeks, and this government's not only ramming this legislation through, but it's asking for an additional six months of spending — unprecedented. No matter how much heckling these government caucus members want to do, this is unprecedented.

What else does it say here? "In addition, interim supply is requested for other items in the estimates, depending upon the need in each case. The main esti-

mates and the bill based thereon are not disposed of until the last allotted day for the supply period ending June 30." In other words, what that means is that in any case, supply should never go beyond the three months of the next fiscal year. Well, that rule's broken. They've broken — how many? They've broken three rules under what is standard parliamentary practice in existence for hundreds of years.

Of course, this government likes to set new records. They love to be the first in everything. They love to attack the poor first. They love to break contracts the first. They love to throw environmental rules out of place. They love to attack children and families first. Now they attack the very foundations of parliament, and they revel in it.

God forbid anybody challenges them on that. They say: "Oh, other governments were worse." Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, no other government is worse than what this government is doing today in the supply bill, Bill 20. They alone stand as having the worst record in defying and undermining parliament.

Now, what will happen when these 74 Liberal government caucus members, or 73.... I'm sorry. There are so many of them defecting, and they're losing the public support, of course. The 73 Liberal MLAs — what will they do? Who gets to spend the money? Well, nobody other than the secret cabinet gets to spend the money, for a full six months — billions and billions and billions.

[1445]

Interjection.

**J. MacPhail:** Yes, secret cabinet. This is also the most secretive government in the history of British Columbia. Oh, they had those phony, mock cabinet meetings on air. They're actually an embarrassment. I'd prefer reality TV. I'd actually prefer watching reality TV where people eat bugs to watching that open cabinet, because they're not even good actors. Even though we know they rehearse, we know they spend a lot of money rehearsing those cabinet meetings, it is painful. It's painful to watch them.

What is the role in cabinet, in relationship to spending and parliament? Well, here's another quote. This is from a celebrated history book on British Parliament, so I know that this government wouldn't be interested in that at all, but here's what they had to say: "While cabinet's purpose was to find and maintain support, its closer relationship with parliament provided a direct opportunity for members to question and publicize government policy and to maintain a constant scrutiny of government."

In other words, cabinet was supposed to report to parliament on spending matters. They were to subject themselves to the scrutiny of parliament. But oh no. That's gone. Of course, this government will run, and the only thing, thank God, that will stop them is the election of May 17.

Here's what they would plan to do. They would plan to take tax dollars that haven't been scrutinized

and spend it on who knows what. But this bill, interim supply, does not in any way give the government the right to fund programs that apply only to the main estimates. Now, I don't know whether the Minister of Finance actually knows that. He is out in the hallway talking about all sorts of parliamentary rules, which I find the interpretation of bizarre on his part.

Here's a parliamentary rule: interim supply cannot be spent on programs that only apply in the main estimates. So will this government try and take that interim supply and apply it to new programs? That's against the law. They will not have the authority under this bill to spend any money on new programs, because that's against the rules of this legislation — hundreds of years of British parliamentary practice. All interim supply is supposed to do is to continue those programs already in place.

The government just got skewered in question period, and they stand up and they say: "Oh, we're giving new money to the Ministry of Children and Family Development." Well, in fact, they don't have the right to. Without passing the budget, the main estimates, they have no right to spend any new moneys on anything.

In fact, if this government goes out and makes one election commitment based on new spending for a budget that is not legal yet and has not been passed, they will be breaking the law. They will be breaking the law, and they don't care. Their arrogance is such that they think they can run and hide from this parliament, shut 'er down, guillotine the parliament weeks and weeks ahead of its conclusion, and then they think they can go out and illegally commit the spending money. Such arrogance has been unheard of. Yet this government caucus isn't even aware of that. They sit there, and they somehow try to challenge that this has been done in the past. Well, it hasn't been done in the past. It has not.

For this government to go out, as they will on Thursday evening, and start campaigning on the taxpayers' dollar.... They will be making election commitment after election commitment that by their very nature will be broken promises as soon as they come out of their mouths. The electorate will judge them on that basis.

[1450]

Now, special estimates, interim supply, is an established practice — again, I'm quoting from the history books. Actually, the rules of procedure for parliament that apply to our everyday lives.... Here's what they say about special estimates — the parliamentary experts: "It is, therefore, the established practice during one financial year to seek authority for some provisional allocations of amounts for the financing of the public service during the next financial year, pending the parliamentary approval of the corresponding main estimates." In other words, if parliament continues, is in session and the debate around the budget's main estimates continues, it is common practice for governments to seek interim supply until those budget estimates are completed on the main budget. The budget is then passed and made legal.

What does this government do? They bring in interim supply on the next fiscal year a full seven or eight weeks before the current parliament has expired and weeks before the current fiscal year has expired. It's never been done before.

There's no reason to do it. The NDP opposition committed to this government that we would have the main estimates of their pre-election budget completed by April 18, which is the expiry of the thirty-seventh parliament. We committed to that.

In fact, the past debates in the House around main estimates would allow for that. Last year's main estimates comprised 27 days of parliamentary debate. In 27 days we could have easily completed that. But oh no, this government doesn't want their budget passed, doesn't want their budget made legal.

What they want to do is break every possible parliamentary practice, set unheard-of precedents so that they can now have the most secretive, behind-closed-doors government operate at their whim. That's what this supply bill does.

They are so out of step. Here's what our own British Columbia members' rule book says about interim supply. The parliamentary rules and procedures book — I don't know whether anybody in the government caucus has read that book — says:

"When all estimates have not been passed by the Legislative Assembly before the end of the fiscal year (which is March 31), an interim supply bill is introduced in the assembly in order for the government to meet its financial commitments. This bill grants a proportion of the budget as a temporary measure until the full estimates have been approved. The passage of an interim supply bill does not preclude the members of the Legislative Assembly from questioning any part of the estimates or from moving motions to reduce any specific vote. There may be one or more interim supply acts."

How many rules is this government breaking? Well, about three or four in that area. They somehow try to call out: "Well, what about this? What about this previous year?" No, here's what this government's doing. They're saying.... Actually, they've got several stories. But they're saying: "Oh no, the public doesn't want this budget legislated. They don't want this budget debated. They want us to get out on the campaign trail."

Well, no, they don't. They don't trust this government. They don't believe this government when this government makes promises. They want to hold their Liberal MLAs to account by having this debate scrutinized and passed.

No, they're running away. I also heard the Minister of Finance say in the hallway: "Well, this budget isn't a real budget, anyway, because the public service is going to have to come back after the next election and bring in a whole new budget." Oh, really? Is this budget not the truth? Can't we trust this budget? Is this just a pre-election budget?

[1455]

Interjection.

**J. MacPhail:** Well, the Minister of Finance says there'll be a new budget.

**Hon. C. Hansen:** I never said that.

**J. MacPhail:** I welcome the Minister of Finance to stand up and say what others have recorded of his words in the hallway. I welcome that, because I'm quoting from what he said in the hallway: that the public service would have to write a new budget for the new parliament.

The Minister of Finance is saying that this budget isn't a real budget anyway. Others may have even more harsh words for it — that the budget may be a stranger to the truth, given the Minister of Finance's comments. But oh no, the government doesn't want to put that to the test by actually debating it line by line, and even more so, they want to take billions of taxpayer dollars without being held to account for any of it.

I would also say that the government will be challenged tomorrow in Committee of Supply to name every single one of the new programs and to account for how, in an election, they're going to go out and promise those programs when they have no approval to spend that money. None. Interim supply is about continuing current government programs — current programs at the funding level they were established at in the main estimates of the previous year.

We will be going through, election promise by election promise. For instance, the seismic upgrading program that they announced yesterday. They have no authority — none, zero — by this act to make any commitment on that seismic upgrading — no authority whatsoever. The Minister of Finance had better try to figure out how he is going to get anyone to believe him during the election when he is ramming this legislation through.

Now, I just want to point out one other thing I find very interesting with this government, about how they claim to be the most open and accountable. Here's what the Budget Transparency and Accountability Amendment Act, 2001, actually says about interim supply. This is the Liberals' own legislation, and I quote from section 6(1). It says: "When estimates are to be presented." Section 6(1) says:

"Subject to subsection (2), the minister must present the main estimates for a fiscal year to the Legislative Assembly with the budget for that fiscal year, on the third Tuesday in February in the immediately preceding fiscal year."

Okay, we've got that. Sub (2) says:

"If... (b) there has been a general election in a fiscal year before passage by the Legislative Assembly of the final Supply Act for that fiscal year, the main estimates referred to in subsection (1) must be presented to the Legislative Assembly no later than 90 days after the post-election appointment of the Executive Council."

So, what does that mean? Let's just work through what that means. That's legalese in legislation, but this is legislation that this government takes great pride in. It fixes a budget date — the third Tuesday in February

— but then it goes on to say, if there is an election, when they have to actually bring in a supply act. When do they actually have to call the main estimates, and when do those main estimates have to be passed?

They have to be passed no later than 90 days after the appointment of the executive council following an election. The return of the writ is June 8. That means that the main estimates have to be fully passed by September 8. I look forward to the Minister of Finance standing up and challenging his own legislation. I look forward to him saying how I'm wrong on that. I can hardly wait. He is going to say that is a wrong interpretation. I just love it.

[1500]

Far be it from me to deny another opportunity for the Minister of Finance to thumb his nose at the citizens, to thumb his nose at British parliamentary practice and British parliamentary law and then his own law about why that's wrong.

Let him stand up and make a mockery of their Budget Transparency and Accountability Act. I can hardly wait because, of course, we are going to enter into an election campaign period starting on Friday, not by choice of the opposition — the opposition wants to stand here and do its job — but because this government wants to start an election on April 8, and anything the Finance minister stands up.... They can be words used against him during the election. I can hardly wait to hear it. Let's see about the openness and accountability.

The other thing the government was going to do was.... They took great pride in saying that they were going to have select standing committees — legislative committees travelling the province holding hearings. They weren't going to make a mockery of legislative standing committees. They were going to make sure that they listened to the electorate.

[J. Weisbeck in the chair.]

Here's the record of the select standing committees. Aboriginal Affairs: 2002, 17 meetings; 2003, zero meetings; 2004, one meeting. Education: 2001, 18 meetings; 2002, one meeting; 2003, one meeting; 2004, six meetings. Here's the other record for the Health Committee....

Interjections.

**J. MacPhail:** I actually love it when this government caucus, especially if they're part of the executive council, accuses anyone of hypocrisy other than themselves. Today we saw a perfect example of hypocrisy, and I'm not referring to this bill. This bill is the second-greatest example of hypocrisy today. The first was when this government stood up and shunned the words of three expert child and family advocates — shunned the words of them. That was hypocrisy.

There you have legislative committees that don't do anything anymore because of this government, I guess, being afraid to actually let their members loose and

demonstrate their skills — and I use that word advisedly.

Why should the public be concerned about this government's record? Why should they actually be fearful of this parliament not debating the main estimates of a budget? Why should they be fearful of a government that is now passing through, with their huge and overwhelmingly arrogant majority, six months of expenditure where no one has to hold them to account? Well, Mr. Speaker, because there's nothing in interim supply that allocates where the funding will go — absolutely nothing.

This government can take that six months of expenditure and expend it any way they want. What if Williams Lake needs health care dollars? This government could just choose to ignore it. If they think the town of Williams Lake ain't going to support them in the election, they can allocate money elsewhere, away from Williams Lake, because there's nothing in the interim supply that allocates the funding — nothing.

There are no regional health authority budgets being approved. It's just a big, honking \$15 billion of money turned over to this government, and they can spend it any way they want. What if there are children at risk? What if some crisis happens in the Ministry of Children and Family Development? There is no obligation on this government to spend that money — none whatsoever.

They can spend it on their slush fund. That's the flip side. They can spend every single nickel in a way that tries to buy the love of British Columbians, but they don't actually have to spend it in a way that makes sense for British Columbians.

[1505]

Here's what the Liberal government has done to British Columbians in the past. Here's what the Liberal record about costing taxpayers more is. Let me read some of the examples of how this Liberal government has taken money out of taxpayers' pockets.

They increased medical services premiums by 50 percent. It's the second-biggest source of revenue now under this government. It's become the second-biggest source of revenue — medical services premiums — because this government has increased them by 50 percent. They've doubled college and university tuition fees. They privatized B.C. Rail for a pittance. They're losing tens of millions of dollars of profit from B.C. Rail. They raised gasoline taxes by 3.5 cents a litre. This government raised gas taxes. They increased property taxes.

They increased the sales tax to 7.5 percent for three years. They put a dozen stones in our shoe, and then they took one out and wanted praise for it when they reduced it back to 7 percent. And they still didn't win the by-election in Surrey-Panorama Ridge.

They increased Pharmacare fees for seniors. They cut the minimum wage to \$6 an hour for new workers. They raised electricity rates after electricity rates were frozen for six years. They raised ICBC rates, and now ICBC makes a huge honking profit. They raised ICBC rates after ICBC rates had been frozen for six years.

They increased child care costs for thousands of B.C. families. They increased physiotherapy costs. British Columbians who have diabetes now have to pay for their podiatry — an absolutely necessary medical treatment for people with diabetes, and this government is making them pay for it out of their own pocket.

They increased eye care fees. They increased drivers' licences, hunting and fishing fees. They put in costly new fees at parks to the extent where the utilization of parks is falling under this government, because nobody can afford it. They have parking meters everywhere in order for people to use the parks.

Tuition fees have skyrocketed so much under this government that college and university enrolment in some areas of the province is actually falling. In fact, I predict this. I will rue the day if my prediction comes true, but I predict this: that this government's as yet unfulfilled promise of 25,000 new post-secondary seats won't be necessary, because so few people can afford the tuition now that enrolment is going down, and that there will actually be excess capacity. How shameful is that? Enrolment is actually going down across the college and university system. It is actually going down.

Interjection.

**J. MacPhail:** Mr. Speaker, I welcome the swan song debates of certain Liberal MLAs to this, but we don't make up these numbers. These came from the colleges themselves, about enrolment going down across the system. Why? The experts who came to present to us in the Finance Committee said it's because people couldn't afford the tuition hikes — the doubling of it.

[1510]

This government had taken away first-year grants so students couldn't afford that, and therefore enrolment is down. It will be shameful if this is the first government that doesn't have to deliver on a promise to expand access because they've harmed the system so much elsewhere that people can't attend. But I predict that will happen.

Let's see what they spent the money on. They spent about \$25 million on a failed reorganization of the Ministry of Children and Family Development — \$25 million wasted. The system is in crisis, and this government acknowledges no responsibility whatsoever — none. Well, that's money they've wasted, isn't it. They've spent almost \$20 million on some pet project, a technology portal project of the Premier's, that's been over budget and over budget and over budget.

They wasted \$6 million on a failed privatization scheme of the Coquihalla Highway. Yet the Royal Inland Hospital, which is at the end of the Coquihalla highway, is stacked up with patients, and it's in crisis. The health care workers there say it's the worst it's ever been. But the corporations are paying less in taxes — absolutely less in taxes. Good. That's great, but I don't think any corporation ever expected their windfall from this government to be at the expense of the most vulnerable.

Here's what's happened while the great corporations got their big tax break. Here's what's happened to the rest of British Columbia. Emergency rooms closed. Entire hospitals shut down. They cut more than \$50 million from child care. Wait-lists have gone up — by their own statistics — by 31 percent under this government. B.C. Ferries shipbuilding jobs have been shipped to Germany. Special needs education was cut under this government. There are 2,500 fewer teachers in British Columbia. This government has laid off 300 nurses. They've cut training and apprenticeship programs so that our skills shortage is ever increasing. They've increased school class sizes...

Interjections.

**Deputy Speaker:** Excuse me, member. I caution you on using unparliamentary language.  
Carry on.

**J. MacPhail:** ...in every single grade. They've created dirty hospitals by privatizing laundry, food and hospital cleaning services. They've cut home care for seniors, and they've even split up some couples. They eliminated services for women in crisis.

Interjection.

**J. MacPhail:** It is terrible. It's the record of the Liberal government. You are absolutely correct. Mr. Speaker, it is disgusting that this government has broken up senior couples. It is the truth that they have done it.

It's very interesting that today is International Women's Day, and this government is cutting services for women in crisis. But they immediately say, just pre-election: "Oh, trust us. We're going to fund services to women again." But they won't let their budget be scrutinized to see what that means. They cut tens of millions of dollars out of legal aid, which directly affects women the most. They throw a pittance back at legal aid, and they want to be praised for it while families are still hurting.

[1515]

They cut support for families in need. They closed over 3,900 long-term care beds. They like to taunt the NDP by saying: "In your ten years you only built 1,400." That's right. We increased the number of long-term care beds, the total supply, by 1,400 beds. That means we replaced every single obsolete bed with a new bed, and we added 1,400 new long-term care beds.

They have the gall to somehow claim that their record is better, when they shut down 3,900 long-term care beds without replacing them first. Then they've added a total net 100 beds — oh, I'm sorry; maybe it's 170 beds — when there are tens of thousands of seniors desperate for long-term care beds. Now hundreds of them are relegated to an acute care bed, which is not the best health care for them, while a person who actually needs an acute care bed is denied that health care treatment. Shame on this.

They closed 113 schools, ripping the heart out of many smaller communities in this province. Children on buses for more than an hour each way, five-year-olds having to ride a bus...

They doubled gambling. They've got thousands and thousands of new slot machines. In fact, every bingo hall is now a casino. I love it when the Solicitor General tries to stand up and say they've reduced the number of casinos — not. In fact, every bingo hall is now a casino, with slot machines, the most addictive kind of gambling known. Video lottery terminals — that's what they've put in every bingo hall. They've put in that...

Interjection.

**J. MacPhail:** I'm sorry. Was the Minister of Finance somehow objecting to me actually using notes? Is there some objection to...?

Interjection.

**Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**J. MacPhail:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance is objecting to the truth. It is quite unbelievable that they use millions of dollars of taxpayer money and then object to the NDP using its own hard-fought-for money to talk to British Columbians. Somehow the Minister of Finance objects to that. Here I stand in the Legislature debating this matter, and the Minister of Finance objects to it. What hypocrisy. What absolute hypocrisy that we stand debating it in this Legislature and that he objects.

Maybe he should take the tens of millions of dollars that he used to mislead the public about his own government's record in the most dishonest way and give it back to the taxpayers. Because that's what they use, taxpayer money, to try to convince the people of British Columbia that their mean-spirited, nasty, untrustworthy record wasn't the truth.

Of course I will make the government's record known. We will do everything as New Democrats to make the government's record known. We will stand here and read it into the record, and we will make sure that every British Columbian knows. I can understand why the government objects. I can understand, because they will do anything to avoid the truth — anything.

There it is, Mr. Speaker. This government wasn't going to expand gambling, and there's what they've done. In fact, you take away the expansion of gambling revenues and their surplus disappears for '05-06. It disappears. That's even after the biggest federal transfer payment ever in the history of British Columbia.

[1520]

Oh, but they blame that on the NDP. What was there — one moment where the federal government gave us an equalization payment of less than \$20 million in our ten years? This government has had billions

of dollars in equalization payments. And they blame other people? I can hardly wait, during...

Interjections.

**Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**J. MacPhail:** ...the Committee of Supply debate on interim supply, to walk the new Minister of Finance through his trying to blame others for their own record in this area. There's notice of what we'll be examining during interim supply committee: their own record in terms of balancing the books. Federal transfer payments, gambling and a tripling of revenue from property transfer tax, and they want to claim that they're the great economic managers and that somehow they deserve credit? No. They deserve responsibility for breaking election promises, plying the most vulnerable, taking money out of their pockets and then claiming that they're the great success.

Interjection.

**J. MacPhail:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance wants me to go on reading this list, and I will.

They cut environmental enforcement and protection of our air, water and forests to such an extent that the Minister of Forests had to delay the implementation of their great, results-based forest practices for a full year. For a full year this government had to delay their great, grand scheme because of the chaos on our land base and because of the cuts to the forest service and the environmental ministry. Well, they don't even mention the word "environment" in their....

**J. Kwan:** Gone.

**J. MacPhail:** Gone.

A full year. Was the light even shone on that? Well, there will be a change on May 17, but if it were up to this government, they would have the forest sector in chaos until the year 2007. Now, there's a silver lining to that, because it turns out that their changes don't work anyway. They attack the cattle ranchers. They put cattle ranchers at risk. There's a blessing in their own great touting.

Let's be clear. The reason they couldn't implement their new forest practices is because there's nobody to do it. They've decimated the Forest Service. Who says that? Not the NDP. The professional foresters say that — the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters. Oh, let's attack them as being naysayers. Let's say how awful the Association of B.C. Professional Foresters is.

Why is it that those great ads the government spent tens of millions of tax dollars on didn't say: "Oh, sorry. We've created chaos in the forest sector, so stay tuned. We're going to delay implementation for another year." Gee, I didn't see that in an ad. Maybe people would feel better about the government using their hard-

earned tax dollars if the government actually told the truth in those ads.

This government has increased raw log exports exponentially — jobs shipped offshore by this government as routine. Just routine. "Oh, here's a raw log export permit. Let's pass it. Let's celebrate it." They probably have a glass of cheer around the cabinet table or....

[1525]

You know what, Mr. Speaker? I bet they don't even discuss their orders-in-council around raw log exports at the cabinet table. I bet you it's such a routine matter now and so frequent that they don't even pay attention to it anymore. Yes, that's the record of this government. It's shameful.

No wonder they don't want to have their budget examined. It's no wonder they want to get out of here as quickly as possible. It's no wonder so many of them are desperate to try to beg their constituents to give them a second chance. It's no wonder that the vast majority of them....

Well, the majority of them have hit the campaign trail already, because they need to do a lot of work with their own constituents to overcome that record I just described. You won't hear any one of the Liberal government caucus members talking about their real record — not one of them. I find it very interesting that this government refuses to take any responsibility for their agenda. They stand up and bat aside anybody who challenges them. We saw that today. It's shameful.

I also want to say that I'm sure there won't be a single Liberal MLA get up and speak to this bill. In fact, I can pretty much guarantee it. If they do, I laud them. I welcome that debate.

We will make our points — all three of us in the New Democrat opposition — and then we will let this government get on with their shameful agenda. One of those Liberal caucus members dare not say that we didn't do our job. We have done our job each and every day in here. We have tried to hold this government to account, and they get ever more secretive. They run and hide ever more frequently, but we will stay here. We will do our job, and we will be the only ones to hold this government to account, because the Liberal caucus members surely won't.

**B. Lekstrom:** I ask leave to make an introduction.

Leave granted.

### Introductions by Members

**B. Lekstrom:** Joining us in the gallery of the Legislature today are the Junior Canadian Rangers. We have 31 Junior Rangers with us. We have seven adult rangers, five members of the Canadian Forces. They come from all over British Columbia as well as, I believe, Churchill, Manitoba. They are down training at Albert Head in firearms training, navigation, rappelling, general training and first aid. Would the House please join me in welcoming them to the Legislature.

### Debate Continued

**J. Kwan:** I rise to debate Bill 20 in second reading, the Supply Act (No. 1), 2005.

As my colleague from Vancouver-Hastings had outlined, the reality is that this government wants to run from accountability in this Legislature. They do not want a light to be shone on their budget that they introduced and that they claim they're very proud of. They claim they have restored the cuts and programs that they have made in the last four years and that British Columbians had to suffer through in the last four years. They claim everything is much better now and that the promises they make in this budget and will campaign on.... Somehow we should just trust them that somehow they'll make good on what they say they will do.

[1530]

Well, we know. We know the track record of this Liberal government and this Premier over the last four years. They made all sorts of promises in 2001. The most notable promise was that they would not actually cut programs for British Columbians in order to facilitate tax cuts for big corporations.

Lo and behold, shortly after the election — in fact, day one after the election — what does the government do? They cut programs. They cut programs to the magnitude of which British Columbians have not seen before. Even with the Social Credit government, in their restraint days, they have not seen such cuts. That's what this government did after the election.

I just want to highlight a couple of areas at this time. In question period today the opposition raised the issues that three respected children and family advocates had written in a letter to the Premier as far back as June 2004, asking to meet and to discuss their concerns about what the government has done in the area of protecting children and families, the lack of accountability and the impacts of the government's action.

You know what happened, Mr. Speaker? The Premier's office, the Premier.... In fact, nobody in government responded to that letter. That was a letter written back in June of 2004. After question period I heard the Government House Leader, the Minister of Finance, just outside the hallways speaking to the media. He said: "Oh, but the letter was hand-delivered to the Premier's office. So it never went into the proper process of processing letters." So they never got the letter.

Well, isn't that interesting? You would think, first of all, that when someone delivers a letter — hand-delivered to you — that it is actually delivered and received. That's what couriers do. That's what the mail service does. They make sure that a piece of mail that someone wants reassurance is delivered is actually hand-delivered to you. The advocates made sure of that, and the government goes: "Oops, we never got it, so don't blame us."

You know what?

**L. Mayencourt:** Maybe they didn't send it.

**J. Kwan:** That doesn't even count or wash. You know why?

The MLA for Vancouver-Burrard claims they never even sent it.

**L. Mayencourt:** No, I said maybe they didn't send it.

**J. Kwan:** How outrageous. You know what? I think the advocates knew exactly where this government was going with that, because you know what they did afterwards? They actually followed up with three phone calls, and there was no response from this government to their phone calls.

You can claim that somehow the letter never arrived. Well, what about those telephone calls? Did nobody answer the phone? Was that the problem? Maybe that's what the government's going to claim. Maybe the Vancouver-Burrard MLA is going to claim that as well. Well, that's been their motto to date: "Don't blame me. Don't hold us to account. We did everything perfectly. We're just wonderful. We might lie about all sorts of things."

**Deputy Speaker:** Member, I want to caution you about the use of unparliamentary language.

**J. Kwan:** "We might pretend that we're going to do all sorts of things."

In reality it is completely just a pretence, and people know that. British Columbians know that.

Let me just put this letter on record now, because these are the questions that ought to be put to the minister in a line-by-line, ministry-by-ministry debate with respect to the spending.

The government wants the authority, under Bill 20, to spend over \$13 billion in operating and \$10 billion in capital without any scrutiny. There's accountability for you. But I have questions, and so, too, does the public.

[1535]

Let me put this letter on record. It's addressed to the Premier, and it's dated June 16, 2004.

"We are writing to you as a group of concerned citizens who believe that our past experiences involved with the protection of children may offer some useful perspectives for your government. We include the former child and family advocate, the previous ombudsman and the two prior children's commissioners. It is with your government's commitment to openness and transparency in decision-making in mind that we write to you personally.

"At this juncture during the first term of your government, we're unclear as to what meaningful avenues are available to children and their representatives when there are issues affecting the health and safety of that child or a group of children and youth. Our principal question is: where do these children and their representatives go when they have concerns about the quality of care or access to services being afforded or denied? Further, how is the public informed about the resolution of

the most difficult of these cases as well as the overall performance of the child protection system?

"It has become known that the preferred course of the Premier's office is to rely on internal quality assurance mechanisms in the Ministry of Children and Family Development. This is certainly in keeping with an ideal way for the administration of government to proceed: for a ministry to take responsibility for its own processes with a view to quality outcomes for children and their families. That being agreed to as a starting point, it is, however, not the end of the discussion as to what model needs to be in place to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

"These questions have become a concern to us and many others, due in part to two recent cases: the twins in the lower mainland who were known to the ministry and were critically injured; and the young girl Kayla, whose unfortunate death was preceded by inquiries to the ministry. We do not intend to speak about the details of these particular cases, as it would be — as the minister recently pointed out in the House — untimely, and we are no longer in positions to know the details of what exactly transpired.

"What is of paramount importance is that despite the public attention given to these cases, we have no answer to the question: how will these matters be independently and adequately investigated and reported? While the police may be involved, short of that, who will review the performance by the ministry officials and report the results in a manner that will bolster the public's confidence that the system examines and addresses such concerns fully and transparently?

"While there were offices dedicated to children in recent years, the scenario would have involved clear delineations between those various offices: the Children's Commission to inquire into the cause of the death or critical injury; the child advocate to provide support and assistance to enable children and youth to speak and be heard; and the ombudsman to ensure that fair procedures were in place with the government agency, the subject of complaint or concern, and to oversee the practices of the Children's Commission, an agency attached to the Attorney General.

"Under your government, the commission and the advocate offices were removed and replaced, ostensibly with the child and youth officer. The ombudsman's office no longer has a team dedicated to child and youth issues, purportedly due to significant cutbacks. While the existing child and youth officer — a title that is unfortunate, as it implies a stand-alone position like the auditor general, ombudsman and privacy commissioner, all officers of the Legislature — is attached to the Attorney General, as was the children's commissioner, it is constituted in quite a different manner and has a significantly different governing statute.

"The office has absolutely no independent investigative powers based on complaints received or on its own initiative. The incumbent has made it known publicly that she will not investigate, save and except on the request of the Attorney General, in keeping with the terms of her statute. To date, to our knowledge, no such reference has been initiated.

"It is inconceivable and unrealistic that the Attorney General has, in his busy schedule, time to remain sensitive to all the matters of concern in another ministry, despite the efforts by the child and youth officer to keep him up to date. In any case, the way in which this officer has been constituted has left members of the public un-

able to contribute to quality outcomes for children and youth, with no place to make their concerns known. We are not suggesting a return to the previous model, but wish to discuss ways in which to enhance the status quo.

[1540]

"This, in our opinion, has an unfortunate result for you. It leaves people with the impression that you do not give credence to the concerns, often forcing them to politicize matters that should more properly be the subject of legitimate complaints about the administration of government, not the executive.

"It also looks like children do not matter to this government — a message inconsistent with what was on your home page — and that you are avoiding responsibility by refusing to be held to account through independent offices.

"These same questions have arisen regarding the budget-setting process and ensuring protection of children. Put simply: how will government report publicly on maintaining, if not enhancing, the health and safety of children, while the budget is reduced for services to children and families?

"We have examined the service outcomes for the ministry and are unable to see transparent measures that address these matters. This is inconsistent with the commitment that you have made publicly to hold all ministries to account for quality outcomes."

The letter goes on at length. The general gist of it is to say that these respected child and family advocates want to work with the government to ensure that there is accountability, that there is an avenue for families and children who are in need of protection to review matters, and that on the budgeting process, there is accountability to ensure the financing — the funding — is actually in place to address these concerns. The government, however, refused to meet. They ignored the concerns raised by these three advocates, and they carried on as though everything was just fine.

We heard today, in question period, the government's response. I ask you this, Mr. Speaker: who do you trust? Do you trust this government, these Liberal MLAs and this Premier who have proven their track record in broken promises in the last four years? Or do you believe the words of three respected children and family advocates and the recommendations and reports which they wrote when they held their independent roles in office and which this Premier, who was then in opposition, and some members of the Liberal back benches — MLAs and cabinet ministers — wholeheartedly supported?

They supported those recommendations when these three independent officers were in place and forwarded reports. But now, is the government suggesting that what these advocates are saying is not valid, that they're not somehow valid concerns?

I put this to you, Mr. Speaker. Who would you trust — a Premier and a government that has broken its promise on B.C. Rail? He said that he wouldn't sell B.C. Rail and then turned around and sold B.C. Rail with a 990-year lease. Would you trust this government and this Premier, who said that he would freeze tuition fees and then turned around...? We saw tuition fees increase by more than 100 percent in post-secondary

education systems. Would you trust this government that said they would not rip up contracts and actually, after the election, went about ripping up all sorts of contracts?

[1545]

Would you believe this Premier and this government, who said they would actually honour the words of an arbitrator in arbitrated decisions — whether it be with the doctors or the Crown prosecutors? As soon as the arbitrators forwarded their report and it was not in keeping with what the government wanted to see, they turned around and wielded the legislative hammer, brought forward legislation and shattered the arbitrator's decisions, recommendations and reports, and arbitrated decisions for these sectors. Would you trust that government and that Premier, who went about doing exactly the opposite of what they said they would do?

Would you trust a Premier and a government that said they would protect the most vulnerable people and then went about closing down some 4,000 long-term care beds, leaving seniors out in the cold, separating seniors who had been together all their lives, moving them out in the communities where they have very few, if any, friends and relatives around them — a government that promised they would build 5,000 new long-term care beds and delivered only 174 to date, a government that says it will deliver 5,000 new long-term care beds by 2008? When you look at the budget, there are actually not the dollars to provide for it. Would you trust this government based on their track record to date?

What about the children? I spoke on protection of children. What about the children who needed hot meal programs? What did this government do?

They went and cut the funding for school boards. They reduced the dollars, and then they said: "Oh, but you know, we don't have enough money, and there are so many children who are hungry, so we have to spend the dollars all across British Columbia. Sorry, Vancouver children. We have to take away some of that money so that we can give it to other children."

Were it not for the community that stood up and challenged this government.... They actually put a little bit of the money back — not the full amount, only a tiny bit of it back. The Vancouver school board had to actually make do by cutting other programs in spite of increased costs for the education system.

Interjection.

**J. Kwan:** Would you trust them if you were a parent who actually faced what this government has done to our education system? I hear the member for Vancouver-Kingsway heckling me. Well, I just received correspondence. Get this. This is an MLA who writes to a constituent and tells the constituent to get a life. Why? Because the constituent disputes what he has to say around the electoral reform system. This is what this member says and how he treats his constituents — the member for Vancouver-Kingsway. I have the e-mail downstairs, which says that.

Interjections.

**Deputy Speaker:** Order, please. Order.

**J. Kwan:** This is how the MLA treats the constituents. Would you trust them to represent you in this House?

Then today — oh, my goodness — the Liberal MLAs all of a sudden found new voices. We had a whole bunch of backbench MLAs all of a sudden getting up to move private members' bills. Funny how that is — that they all lost their voices for four years before today, and there are only three days left before this government is going to shut down the House. All of a sudden those poor MLAs who have been sitting around for four years found their voices.

Except this, Mr. Speaker. The government has made it clear that nothing these backbench MLAs introduce today will even be debated or be considered by government. What a waste of time and waste of breath. You'd think that for the last four years they might have actually responded to their constituents' concerns, but no — not so. They waited until three days before the House is forced to adjourn. Then all of a sudden they decide they'd better get up there and say something now so that they can say they did say something in the last four years in the Legislature. Isn't that the real motivation behind why some of these Liberal MLAs all of a sudden started to speak?

Interjection.

**J. Kwan:** It is fascinating to note....

[1550]

Interjection.

**J. Kwan:** You know, I hear the member for Vancouver-Burrard heckling me. He goes: "Well, I didn't hear you put forward any bills."

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Let me tell you this. Every single day in this Legislature for the last four years, save and except four weeks after I had my daughter....

Interjection.

**J. Kwan:** Save and except four weeks when I was away from this Legislature.... Beyond that, I was in here every single day holding this government to account. I held the government to account on their bills, on their legislation, on their budgets, to the point where....

The member for Vancouver-Burrard was asked by his constituents to raise issues — around the tenancy rights issue, around the welfare changes — and he did nothing. He did nothing.

Interjection.

**J. Kwan:** Get this. Then the member for Vancouver-Burrard said: "Oh, gee. I didn't think I was supposed to

ask anything, because the member for Vancouver-Mount Pleasant has asked all the things that I wanted to ask."

With the exception of this: when it came down to vote when amendments were put forward to amend various bills, which I and my colleague from Vancouver-Hastings put forward and which this government voted against, including the member for Vancouver-Burrard.... Where was he if he said that I actually raised all the issues that he wanted to raise? He voted against every one of those amendments.

The record is there. Thank goodness for Hansard, for the good work that they do, because every single word that's spoken in this House is actually recorded. They can't hide from that record. At least on that basis, they cannot hide.

What this government is now doing is that they will run and they will hide. That explains why the Minister of Finance had running shoes on budget day — so that he can run as fast as he can and go hide from the public so that a light could not be shone on the budget. That's why we have the interim supply bill before us — because the government does not want a light shone on their budget. That is the real reason why this is happening.

What accountability? What transparency? This government does not even know the meaning of those words. When the public tried to hold them to account over the last four years, here's what they've done. In every single instance they say: "Don't blame us. Blame someone else. It wasn't me. They made the decision. Other people made the decision. We didn't do it." That's been their consistent record.

[H. Long in the chair.]

Well, this government wants to go and have taxpayers pay for their pre-election campaign work. That's what's happening. All the Liberal MLAs, after Thursday, will run out there and start campaigning and making promises all over again. They will try to get British Columbians to forget about their record. But you know what? British Columbians are not stupid. They will know the difference of what this government has done, and they will remember what this government has done.

Let me just highlight another area for you. Today is International Women's Day. We celebrated earlier the memory of Rosemary Brown and many other women who worked very hard to establish the record and to move us forward. But what has this government done in the last four years to move the women's agenda forward?

Well, let's just take a quick review. It has been well documented and supported by experts like Dr. Clyde Hertzman that we need to have good-quality day care. In spite of that, what has the government done? They cancelled universal day care, one of their top cancellation of programs.

Interjection.

**Deputy Speaker:** Order, member. The member has the floor.

[1555]

**J. Kwan:** They cut day care. They cancelled the universal program. Then they cut subsidies in the area of day care. Then the federal dollars that came and were earmarked for day care.... They didn't put it into day care. It went everywhere else but to day care. That's their track record. Go and ask the advocates, the experts in the field, what they say about this government's record around day care. It isn't just me who is saying this. Everyone who knows the truth is saying this.

We all know that by and large, the responsibility for children still falls mainly on women. We know that. We're trying to work towards change, but the society is still such that the responsibility is still primarily on the shoulders of women. Has the government done anything to help them to advance that agenda? They have done anything but advance the agenda.

Well, let's think a little bit about the most vulnerable people. This government said that they were going to protect the most vulnerable people. Let's see what they have done. Massive reductions and reduced eligibility for people on income assistance, creating some of the greatest hardships for people who are in greatest need.

Just so members in this House know, one-third of B.C.'s income assistance recipients are single-parent families, 88 percent of which are headed by women. That's the legacy of this government. Welfare benefits constitute between 32 and 49 percent of Statistics Canada's low-income cutoff in large cities. Single mothers can no longer keep the \$100 child support under this government's policy and direction, taking money that's actually directed for children living in poverty. That's the government's track record.

Earning exemptions have disappeared for single parents. Mothers are employable when the youngest child reaches the age of three. Welfare recipients no longer attend universities or colleges, and those deemed employable can only receive time-limited assistance for two out of five years. Those are the policies that this government brought in, which the member for Vancouver-Burrard voted for. In fact, every single Liberal voted for those policy decisions and the legislation that was brought in by this government.

We brought forward amendments. We challenged the government on this. We told the government to table that piece of legislation, and they did none of that. That's how they have advanced women.

Now we just have — February 9, 2005 — the Minister for Women's Services saying that she doesn't support universal child care. This is on February 9, 2005, in the Invermere *Valley Echo* from the Minister of State for Women's Services, who is actually on record to say that she does not support universal child care. This is how a government works to support children and women.

Let me just close with a few other remarks. What about the children in the community living sector, the

people with developmental disabilities, children with autism? None of them got the support that they deserve from this government, and this is the record that we will be voting on, on May 17. If the government has any guts, they would allow for line-by-line debate so that they can be held to account, as they pretend they want to be.

**J. Brar:** It is with great frustration that I stand here to debate Bill 20. First of all, I feel compelled to repeat what my colleagues before me have stated — that it's shameful for this government to shrug off its responsibility to British Columbians and close down this House six weeks early.

[1600]

It was this government that brought in the fixed sittings of the House, and now this government is abusing its power to ensure that its MLAs get a head start on the election campaign. What a great job this government is doing.

Each and every one of us in this House has a responsibility to our constituents, to the people of British Columbia, to represent them and ensure that their needs are being met and their hard-earned tax dollars are being well spent. That's what I intended to do when I came here as the new MLA for Surrey-Panorama Ridge. That's what I believe my constituents in Surrey-Panorama Ridge elected me to do. Now this government is stopping me from doing my job.

Immediately after the by-election the Premier of this province promised that as a new MLA, I would have the benefit of the fall sitting of the House. I ran in the by-election with the determination to do right by my constituents. When I came here as a new MLA, I came with a lot of ideas, a lot of energy, a lot of heart and a lot of expectations from the people of Surrey-Panorama Ridge.

First of all, the by-election was delayed for four months. Therefore, there was no MLA in Surrey-Panorama Ridge to stand up for the people of Surrey-Panorama Ridge. Then the by-election, which I won, finally took place on October 28. The people of Surrey-Panorama Ridge elected me, put their faith in me and sent me here to stand up for them and speak on behalf of them. That is my job. That was the goal with which I came here in the last session of this government.

Let me tell you that this government has done everything possible from the very first day to silence my voice since I came. On the very second day, the timing of question period was changed, which of course limited my ability to ask questions. But that did not stop me from asking questions on behalf of my people in Surrey-Panorama Ridge. When I stand up every day to ask questions, and I see that 15 to 20 members are heckling to again limit my ability to ask questions.... But that did not stop me. I still continue asking hard questions on behalf of the people of Surrey-Panorama Ridge.

On the very first day, I asked the question about Surrey Memorial Hospital and the crisis we have in the emergency room. I continued asking that question for almost seven days without getting any straight an-

swers from the minister. But that did not stop me from doing my job. I will continue standing up here and asking questions on behalf of the people of Surrey-Panorama Ridge.

[1605]

The other thing I want to say.... As a new MLA, my understanding about this House was that this is the highest institution in the province to protect democracy, provide leadership on the issues of democracy, provide a role model for our new generation and debate the very important issues to the people of British Columbia. But this government is telling us, and telling me as the new MLA, that I cannot even debate the budget ministry by ministry, line by line. Now I stand up here to speak for the interim supply act, Bill 20, and it is shocking to me as a new MLA that the government is trying to get approval for six long months out of 12 months.

The tradition of interim supply bills, as I know, has usually been up to three months. But this is a strange situation we face in British Columbia. The government is asking for a six-month interim supply bill. My question is: in that situation, why do we even need to debate the budget for a full year? I don't see any logical connection between the two.

That's what this Liberal government is doing. I assume they're not prepared to debate the budget because there are a lot of questions and a lot of things they're probably trying to hide from the people of British Columbia, because it is too close to the election. But the people of British Columbia cannot be fooled again. When we go to the election on May 17, the people of British Columbia will send a very clear message to Victoria and to the Liberal government.

Let me tell you why I ran in the by-election. One of the major factors was that this government made tons of promises in the *New Era* document when they went into election in 2001, stating to the people of British Columbia that they will do all those beautiful promises in these four years. What we saw, in fact, was promises broken one after the other.

Just to say a few, the *New Era* document says that we will provide the best education so that no child is left behind. But in fact, what happened in this province? One hundred and fourteen schools have been closed. Libraries have been closed. In one school in my riding, Princess Margaret School, funding cuts to the special needs kids and ESL kids have been done. In 2001 there were 17 teachers teaching ESL and special needs kids in Princess Margaret School, which falls in the Surrey-Panorama riding. Now there are only seven.

[1610]

The tuition fees in post-secondary education have gone up 300 percent in some cases. That limits the ability of ordinary families to send their children to universities and colleges so that they can achieve their dreams. There are many families I know.... There are many parents of young students who have to change their whole plan for their career, because they can certainly not afford the fees which we have in this province. The grant program, which was put in place to

ensure that the kids of ordinary families and low-income families get the same opportunity to realize their potential as anybody else, was taken away by this government.

Health care is the same story. This government promised, very clearly, health care when you need it, where you need it. In fact, the government did exactly the opposite. They closed hospitals, they privatized health care services, and they cut funding to the health care system. The story of Surrey Memorial is a living example. This government has confirmed that by taking some actions after we put a lot of pressure on the government.

B.C. Rail. There was a promise that they would not sell B.C. Rail, but in fact, they did the opposite. They sold B.C. Rail. They also promised not to expand gambling, but in fact, they did the opposite. They expanded gambling as well.

If you look at the list of promises made in 2001, I have lots of questions, and my people in Surrey-Panorama Ridge have lots of questions on the budget as well. What I hear from this government is that we cannot ask those questions, when it was high on the agenda that this government would provide the most open, transparent and accountable government. I see none of that in shutting down the House and in not debating the budget and giving us the opportunity to ask questions of the government.

The end result of this is that the people of British Columbia are paying the price. For example, in Surrey Memorial Hospital, in the Fraser health region, 800 long-term care beds were cut. The capital budget shortfall this year is \$50 million, which is going to go up to \$150 million by next year. The response of this government to the tremendous pressure put by the opposition on the situation of the emergency room in Surrey Memorial was to fire CEO Bob Smith as a scapegoat. That was the response; that was the action this government took. That is nothing more than a quick political fix, to expand the ER in Surrey Memorial Hospital after the great embarrassment this government has been through.

[1615]

Well, let me tell you, the crisis in health care is not isolated to Surrey alone. Everywhere I go, I see people with lots of questions, with lots of concerns. I went to Port Alice, for example — a very small town in this province, just 900 people in the community. One of the things I heard in the community hall meeting from a young mother was that her son was the last child to be born in the hospital and that after that the hospital was closed.

If you go and talk to people in Penticton, it's the same story. Talk to people in Kamloops — the same story. Just a few days ago we heard a story that the staff had to wait almost 12 hours with a patient in the corridor because there was no bed — same as Victoria. There's a big capital shortfall and no money for the expansion of the emergency room.

That is not the story of a few cities; that is the story of the whole province. It becomes worse when we go to

smaller communities. In this country, it is almost shocking to believe that you have to travel for three hours with your kid just to get a prescription from a doctor. That's not what I thought about Canada when I made my decision to move to this country. That's not what many people think about Canada when they come to this country — that this is what we get in hospitals.

Can we believe that a young mother with a two-year-old child who has some problems, who is constantly crying for six hours without being seen by a doctor...? That's what is happening in hospitals in British Columbia. This Liberal government has done nothing to fix the problem. The wait-list has gone up 32 percent, 34 percent in many cases. In many cases, particularly when we talk about seniors, their knee replacements, it has gone up 80 percent.

Yet we hear from the Liberal government that they have put in more money. Is that the response you do to fix the problem? I think the government has been too much obsessed with their extreme agenda and not looking into the real problems people of this province are facing: health care and education. They didn't spend even a single second to think and fix the problem in this province.

I came here with many, many questions. I'm totally frustrated to hear from the government that they are not prepared to answer the questions. It is shocking to me that from a new MLA.... I don't know why the government is scared that he can stand and ask questions. If they cannot answer my questions, how can they answer questions from the people of British Columbia? What are they hiding in the budget? Why are they not telling the true story to the people of British Columbia?

I was also surprised to hear that the Minister of Finance is saying: "We may change the budget when we come back." How can we trust the interim supply act, Bill 20? How can we give approval to this without debating all those things and asking questions and getting the right answers?

[1620]

I think the people of my riding will probably accept my answer: I don't think that it's responsible on my part to approve something without debating in this House, without asking the questions so that the hard-earned tax dollars of my constituents are well spent in this province and so that they get the services they need. I'm sure British Columbians have a lot of questions as well, but this government has made it very clear from the very first day that they're not prepared to answer any questions.

I think the Liberal government has defined democracy in a different way. I cannot find in any possible directory the definition of democracy which I see here from the Liberal government. Democracy has been shrinking from the day this government took over.

Finally, what we have seen is that they have almost put a lid on it by saying that they're not prepared to debate the budget. All these questions cannot be answered without having full debate ministry by minis-

try, line by line. I must say this: I will go back with more questions in my mind about this government than when I came here. I must say this: I will go back and try my best to tell the true story of what's happening in Victoria to the people of my city, the people of my riding and the people of British Columbia, so that when they go to polls on May 17, the people send a very strong message to Victoria and to the Liberal government.

**R. Sultan:** The opposition has made the point over and over again that there has been insufficient debate on the provisions of this budget and interim supply, of which Bill 20 is an integral part. I would suggest to the House that perhaps parts of this budget are not debatable, even by our friends on the Left. I refer in particular to the tax cuts for the poor, and I would just like to review once again what this budget accomplishes in that regard.

In the budget, almost three-quarters of a million British Columbians — about a third of the entire workforce in B.C. — will either pay no provincial income taxes at all or will see their British Columbia income taxes reduced. More specifically, about 330,000 people earning up to \$16,000 a year will pay no tax at all, and another 400,000 earning up to \$26,000 will have their taxes cut. Add on reduced MSP premiums for a big chunk of the population, and it adds up to a big tax break for the poor. It has been skewed towards the lower incomes. I doubt if our friends on the Left would object to that.

Interjection.

**Deputy Speaker:** Order, member.

**R. Sultan:** If the magnitude of the tax breaks for the poor in this budget is difficult to grasp, it's convenient to compare the tax cuts of this government as proposed in the budget to those contained in the recent federal budget. Let me just review those again.

The federal budget, on the matter of taxes paid by lower-income people, raised the basic exemption to \$10,000 by 2009 — eliminating taxes for 860,000 low-income people by 2009. By comparison, this government eliminated provincial income taxes for 330,000 people, as I've just said.

[1625]

If the feds had followed the B.C. model, they wouldn't have eliminated taxes for 860,000 people; they would have eliminated taxes for 2.4 million people. They're moving in the right direction, but they've got a long way to go to catch up. They're only one-third of the way there, according to my calculations.

Let's look at the dollars. The federal government's changes amounted to \$387 million in savings across Canada this year. The B.C. government's budget provides \$480 million in relief in British Columbia alone. If the federal government had carried out our fiscal plan, we would have seen the federal budget with \$3.6 billion of tax relief this year, instead of \$387 million actually delivered. I think they're about 11 percent of the way there, according to British Columbia standards.

Taxes are, of course, important to fund necessary social programs, and we really cannot do without them and operate government. What is particularly difficult to understand is that anybody would object to tax cuts for the very segment of society that many of these programs are targeted to serve.

What do taxes do to the low-income poor, and why would our friends opposite vote against those tax cuts for low-income people, as they have done? Why would they vote against removing low-income people from the tax rolls entirely, as they have done?

Here's what high taxes do for people on low income. They give a double whammy to the welfare trap: lose your income assistance, and pay taxes on what little you earn. That is not good social policy. Why would the opposition favour doing that?

Disproportionately, taxes are more important to the poor than the rich. The bite is heavier because, of course, they have a lower margin to live on in the first place. Why would anybody vote against tax cuts for the poor?

Finally, taxes raised on the backs of low-income people really produce meagre income for the government. If one looks at social policy in the whole, the pain of discomfort they inflict on the payer is far in excess of the revenue benefit to government. Why would the party opposite vote in favour of that? I ask the question.

This vote taken is not really in the tradition of the great names of their party. I'm wondering how voting against tax cuts for the poor would sit with Tommy Douglas. I wonder how voting against tax cuts for the poor would sit with Stephen Lewis, if he were present in this House. I wonder what Ed Broadbent would say about voting against tax cuts for the poor. For that matter, I wonder what Mike Harcourt would say about voting against tax cuts for the poor. I don't think they'd be too pleased with that approach.

I find it surprising and astonishing; in fact, I would even say it is shocking. I would say the budget, when it provides massive tax cuts for the poor, is one that deserves all of our credit and praise.

**Hon. G. Bruce:** I move second reading of Bill 20.

[1630-1635]

Second reading of Bill 20 approved on the following division:

YEAS — 36

Falcon	Coell	Wong
Chong	Hawkins	Bell
van Dongen	Barisoff	Roddick
Wilson	Bray	Cobb
Murray	Bond	Bruce
Brice	Abbott	Anderson
Jarvis	Orr	Nebbeling
Chutter	Mayencourt	Krueger
J. Reid	Stephens	Masi

Bhullar	Lekstrom	MacKay
K. Stewart	Suffredine	Whittred
Sultan	Hawes	Kerr

NAYS—4

Kwan	MacPhail	Brar
	Nettleton	

**Hon. G. Bruce:** I move that the bill be referred to a committee to be considered at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 20, Supply Act (No. 1), 2005, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Hon. G. Bruce moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

**Deputy Speaker:** The House will stand adjourned until 2 p.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 4:38 p.m.