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LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR
His Honour the Honourable Steven L. Point, OBC

THIRD SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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MONDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2007

The House met at 1:35 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Introductions by Members

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, I'm going to start off with the first introduction. On the way home, when we left here on Thursday, November 8, my daughter-in-law Eliza and son Darren blessed my wife Edna and me with a 7-pound, 14-ounce baby girl named Kayla Ramos Barisoff, who is at home now just doing great. I don't think I could be a prouder grandfather than I am today. So would the House please make her welcome.

Hon. L. Reid: In keeping with the baby theme, I'd like the House to welcome back to this place Rheta Steer, who is the woman who cared for my babies when they were growing up in this place, when they were very small. She's joined in the gallery today by her new daughter-in-law Songsee Steer. I'd ask the House to please make them very welcome.

C. Trevena: Mr. Speaker, many congratulations.

I would like to introduce to the House five Ukrainian women with whom the member for West Vancouver-Garibaldi and I had the pleasure of having lunch and a good discussion about women in the political system.

The women are from Vinnitsa in western Ukraine, and I hope they will pardon my pronunciation of their names. We have in the gallery Larisa Tkach, a psychologist; Iryna Holavashenko, who is the director of the gender centre in Vinnitsa; Natalia Shcherbata, who is a lawyer; Zoryna Kovalchuk, who is also a lawyer; and Tanya Koneya, who is a student.

They are accompanied by Stewart Goodings, who has been facilitating their trip to B.C. They spent the last three days in Vancouver through CIDA to attend the campaign school of the Canadian Women Voters Congress. They're observing our proceedings through question period, and tomorrow they're going to be meeting city councillors in Vancouver. I hope the House will make them all very welcome.

D. MacKay: Mr. Speaker, I have to say with some disappointment that I haven't had a chance to introduce anybody this session, and you just took my comments and introduced your granddaughter to the chamber. But there's another role that goes with becoming a grandparent, and I hope you understand that this is your first grandchild. As I look around this chamber, there are a lot of grandparents in this room. I would suggest to you that if you don't know how to spoil your grandchild, you can speak to one of us.

G. Robertson: I would like to welcome my mom to the House today. Corneil Therrien has joined us today in the gallery. I just found out only moments ago that her mother — my grandmother — actually worked

here in this building back in the day. Would the House please make my mom welcome.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

NATIONAL ADDICTIONS AWARENESS WEEK

D. Chudnovsky: This week is National Addictions Awareness Week. The National Addictions Awareness Week objective is to provide information and promote activities that will generate awareness on addictions issues that affect people across the country. Its focus is celebrating success in addictions awareness.

The NAAW has become an avenue for effectively mobilizing communities, working together towards a common goal, as well as strengthening a partnership of first nations, Inuit, Métis and non-aboriginal professionals working in the area of addictions. Collectively, communities facilitate the involvement of almost 600,000 participants across Canada. This helps make Join the Circle a success and exemplifies the work being accomplished by aboriginal and non-aboriginal people to fight addictions.

National Addictions Awareness Week is a time to celebrate the joy of an addictions-free lifestyle. It's a time to honour each other. This year National Addictions Awareness Week has revised an old slogan, "It takes a whole community to raise a child," and replaced it with: "It takes a healthy community to raise a child."

The organizers of National Addictions Awareness Week have published the following declaration: "We hope that this one week of non-addictions will show some people that it really is a more satisfying way of life. We hope that this one week will become the first week of the rest of their lives. We hope that we create healthy people, healthy families, healthy communities and one healthy nation."

Please join me in celebrating National Addictions Awareness Week.

[1340]

BUD CALDWELL

B. Bennett: All of the members of this House have special people back home in their constituencies. Today I'd like to honour a special person from my hometown in Cranbrook. His name is Bud Caldwell. Bud and his wife Maxine are known as Mr. and Mrs. Cranbrook. They've made our community a welcoming place for the past 60 years.

I asked Bud to lay the province's wreath on November 11 in Cranbrook, and he told his children how proud he was to do it. I know that Bud might be watching here today. If he's not, I know that his daughter Liz will be recording this.

Bud, you have to know that we here in the Legislature are very proud to have had you lay our wreath in the memory of your comrades from World War II.

You see, Mr. Speaker, Bud is a war hero. Until recent years Bud didn't talk much about his wartime

experiences. At 18 he enlisted against his parents' wishes. He was part of the British Royal Air Force paratrooper drop into the Rhine Valley. One thousand young men dropped out of the sky only to be ambushed by a forewarned Nazi army. All but 40 of those 1,000 young men were killed before they hit the ground. Bud was one who survived. Bud's packsack on his back was shot full of holes, as was his radio on his front.

He ended up on the ground with a dead soldier on top of him. He walked for five days with no food, covered in blood. He survived that, and he survived the rest of the war. More recently Bud fought off an attack by cancer that has left his heart struggling to keep up to this amazingly energetic, inspiring and optimistic human being.

Bud, from all of us here in the B.C. Legislature, thank you for your sacrifice and your selfless contribution to keep us free, and thank you for being such a great British Columbian all these years. You are a true hero, and I am proud to know you.

COST OF HOMELESSNESS

H. Bains: Homelessness has reached epidemic numbers in the lower mainland, with rapid growth in Surrey. People are living in the doorways of businesses, under overpasses and any other place they can find to stay dry and warm. Some folks work for day labour organizations. Others live day to day with what they can find to eat and hope they might find a dry space to curl up for a night's sleep. Many have addictions and mental conditions and are unable to cope with the situation.

The cost of addiction is substantial not only to the individual taxpayers and businesses, insurance companies, local police forces but to our health care system and correctional institutes.

Some statistics around the cost from Project Comeback, an organization in Surrey committed to finding suitable housing and employment for homeless day labourers in Surrey. The cost of a bed in a psychiatric hospital is approximately \$500 a day. The cost of a bed in a correctional institution is \$155 to \$200 per day. The combined cost of service and housing in a social housing facility averages between \$60 and \$76 per day. Project Comeback's current average cost per person for food and shelter is \$16 per day.

Obviously, the cost of homelessness is far greater than the cost to provide people with a place to live. The choices are clear. We can ignore the situation and continue to pay substantially higher costs through health care and policing or deal with the situation and realize social and economic gains.

Today, with the economy booming due to the increase in commodity prices, with record surpluses, we are in a perfect position to help not only the individuals in need but save ourselves from international embarrassment. Therefore, I urge this House to redouble our efforts and resources and put them together and make a commitment to eliminate the homelessness problem before it's too late.

TARA SINGH HAYER

D. Hayer: I rise to speak of the courage and dedication of all those who won our freedom during the past world conflicts, including World War I, World War II and Korea, as well as many other Canadians who served as peacekeepers around the world, and to talk about those who today are risking their lives to preserve the freedoms that are so precious to us in our country.

Last week I attended Remembrance Day ceremonies to pay homage to those who fought so bravely for our freedoms and to those who have given their lives so recently in Afghanistan.

Yesterday, November 18, I observed another remembrance for a freedom fighter — my father Tara Singh Hayer, who fought so diligently for freedom of speech and for the freedom that so many of us take for granted.

[1345]

He also spoke loudly and through his newspaper against terrorism and injustice, and for that he was assassinated nine years ago. To recognize the sacrifices made by my father, a memorial service was held on Sunday at Guru Nanak Sikh Temple in Surrey to celebrate his life and the contributions he made to further the cause of peace, security and freedom.

While this tragedy struck deeply into the hearts of my family and our community, it also had a great effect on all Canadians, including the Indo-Canadian community, the vast majority of which is dedicated to the freedom and equality that Canadians hold so precious.

I would like to remind this House and everybody in here today that we must all be vigilant against terrorism and be willing to fight in any way we can to preserve our freedoms and our democracy.

SOINTULA WINTER FEST

C. Trevena: I rise today to tell the House about a community celebration which marks the drawing in of the days. For 31 years the community of Sointula on Malcolm Island has been holding Winter Fest on the third Saturday in November. Winter Fest fills and overflows the two community halls in the former Finnish fishing community.

While it does attract some people from Port McNeill and other parts of the region, it is truly a community event. Hand-knit socks jostle for space with smokehouse wild salmon. Local honeys and handcrafted jewellery are close by. The crafts and creations for sale at Winter Fest are all local. It's also a chance to share information, whether it's about Bere Point Park, the whale rubbing beach, the goings-on at the village information centre itself or emergency preparedness on the island.

Emergency preparedness in Sointula isn't just getting ready for the big one. This has already been a year where storms have washed out roads and where power outages have happened regularly across the north Island.

In fact, on the whole of the real north Island from Woss north, there was no power all day Friday. While B.C. Hydro crews worked diligently to reconnect people and were eventually successful, in Sointula one of

the side effects was that there was no banking the day before Winter Fest. Saturday morning the credit union was overflowing with people trying to get cash for their gifts.

Winter Fest culminates with a community show in the evening, with singing and dancing and performances from all ages and all backgrounds. While each Winter Fest community performance is memorable for a certain skit or song — I remember the knitting grannies of last year — this year's will be remembered for community resilience.

Two-thirds of the way through, the power went out again. Someone rustled up a portable tape deck with speakers, someone else got the batteries, everyone in the audience passed their flashlights to the front, and the show went on. That is truly the community spirit, which is the hallmark of Winter Fest and what Winter Fest is really about.

DOUGLAS DAY

M. Polak: Today I rise to wish British Columbia a very happy birthday. On this day in 1858 at Fort Langley, Sir James Douglas signed the proclamation that officially named British Columbia as a Crown colony. What has come to be known as Douglas Day has been celebrated in the township of Langley since the 1920s. A banquet in honour of pioneering families is held annually to acknowledge the contributions of so many who have gone before us.

Next year's 150th birthday will be an opportunity to celebrate this great province and all that we've accomplished over the past century and a half. It's a chance to look back over past accomplishments and to the future of this great province, and there's a lot to be proud of.

Sir James Douglas would certainly be proud. Douglas was a visionary, a sensible leader and a humanitarian, and is often credited as the father of British Columbia. Douglas was an employee and officer of the Hudson's Bay Company and a British colonial governor.

From 1851 to 1864 he was governor of the colony of Vancouver Island. In 1858 he became the first governor of the colony of British Columbia. He remained governor of both Vancouver Island and British Columbia until his retirement in 1864. Sir Douglas died in Victoria on August 2, 1877 at 73, and his funeral procession was possibly the largest in the history of B.C.

Next year will be the 150th birthday of British Columbia, and today I want to wish everyone a happy Douglas Day.

[1350]

D. Routley: I seek leave to make an introduction.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Introductions by Members

D. Routley: I'd like the members of the House to help me welcome Karen and Taryn Rentschler and Keith MacKenzie, constituents of mine who have come

down to visit and see how things work here. I have the luxury, being close by, to invite many guests — and maybe the luxury of having them close by to keep an eye on me as well.

Will the members of the House please help me make my constituents welcome.

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO DEATH OF ROBERT DZIEKANSKI

C. James: Last week British Columbians, Canadians and in fact people from all over the world were shocked and angered when they saw the graphic video of Robert Dziekanski's death. Both the Solicitor General and the Attorney General dismissed the idea of a public inquiry. They said it was unnecessary.

This is the fourth time in a month that the Solicitor General has chosen to be dismissive rather than take real action. This time he did it with the world watching. British Columbians expect better, especially when our province's reputation is at stake.

Today we hear that the Solicitor General has finally announced a public inquiry. My question is: why did it take the Solicitor General so long to act?

Hon. J. Les: British Columbians were certainly shocked and horrified last week when the tape was made available around the events that occurred on October 14. No one could have been left unmoved upon seeing that video. It is an example of something that should never have occurred in British Columbia.

It is our obligation now, first of all, to see that justice is done, that all of the facts related to this issue are properly investigated, but also to ensure that British Columbians, Canadians and in fact people around the world also now get an opportunity to see how we as British Columbians properly and effectively deal with this type of matter.

Mr. Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition has a supplemental.

C. James: A mother lost her son. An immigrant to our country died at our gateway in British Columbia. There was no one there to help him. Multiple agencies failed him. They failed his family. The Solicitor General has finally agreed to what we and British Columbians have been calling for, which is a public inquiry.

Now will the Solicitor General take the important and necessary step and apologize to all British Columbians for this tragic incident?

Hon. J. Les: I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say we are indeed sorry for what happened. This should never have happened, and we particularly apologize to Mr. Dziekanski's family. They will carry this sorrow with them for a long, long time.

We have an obligation, as a result, to ensure that we do everything we can to ascertain what the facts are, what the issues are, how we can learn from this,

how we can ensure that this never happens again. The production of the video last week certainly multiplied the questions that British Columbians had around this issue.

We have numerous processes in place specifically designed to find out what the situation was and how this occurred. With the public inquiry, we'll be able to bring all of that together in a public way, in an integrated fashion so that all of those questions will be answered.

B. Ralston: The tragic death of Robert Dziekanski is making headlines around the world, including in *The Times of India*, arguably the leading English-language daily of India. The Premier is travelling to India in the first week of December.

[1355]

My question is to the Attorney General, who is travelling with him. What assurances will he be giving to Indians that he's meeting there, who he's going to invite to visit our province, that they will be able to enter through the Vancouver Airport safely?

Hon. W. Oppal: I think the world knows that we are a welcoming society. We have a WelcomeBC initiative. We have worked with multicultural groups around the world to ensure that they know that British Columbia welcomes all immigrants. I think the one incident that took place is tragic, and it's regrettable. But I think that reasonable people throughout the world know that was an unusual incident, and we hope to learn from it.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

B. Ralston: Today it was announced that 14-year-old Chilean twins who'd planned a Canadian holiday in the B.C. interior cancelled their trip after viewing the video back at home in Chile.

My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts. What steps is he taking to ensure that the word gets out that British Columbia and the Vancouver International Airport are, indeed, warm and welcoming places as opposed to what's depicted in that video?

Hon. J. Les: I think citizens around the world can actually look at the process that we have now laid out with respect to the public commission of inquiry around this issue. They will be able to appreciate that we in British Columbia have taken the lead on this issue. We want it to be investigated in an absolutely thorough way. We don't want to leave any of the issues undiscovered.

I think people around the world will, in a fair-minded way, be able to evaluate our response. They will know that they will be able to continue to come to British Columbia. I think all of our objectives are to make sure that people feel welcome here and that they feel safe while they're in British Columbia.

TASER USE IN B.C.

L. Krog: The public deserves and expects answers about this tragedy. The police obviously deserve to

have proper training on the use of Tasers, and that's going to take time. But in the meantime, the public needs to be able to have confidence that this kind of tragedy will never happen again.

My question to the Solicitor General is very simple. Will he show some leadership today and call for a temporary moratorium on the use of Tasers in B.C. until we get the answers we deserve?

Hon. J. Les: The use of Tasers, of course, is a very complex issue. It was discussed most recently at the justice ministers' meeting last week in Winnipeg. The consensus there was that there should be no immediate moratorium on the use of Tasers. I note, as well, that the federal leader of the NDP agrees with that position.

Tasers were brought into use in British Columbia in the 1990s under the previous NDP government after a very considered decision. They do have their place in police enforcement. They are, of course, to be used carefully and within guidelines, and we expect that to happen in British Columbia.

While the use of Tasers in British Columbia will continue, I have asked, as an urgent matter, that the British Columbia Association of Chiefs of Police, when they meet this coming Wednesday — the day after tomorrow — carefully consider the guidelines surrounding the use of Tasers and whether or not, in some cases, those Tasers have been used outside of those guidelines.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

L. Krog: Mrs. Dziekanski's only son is dead. All that is being asked today of this Solicitor General, of this government, is to take the tiny risk of imposing a temporary moratorium on the use of Tasers. Surely the Solicitor General would wish to ensure that this kind of tragedy would never happen again.

Again I ask the Solicitor General: will he agree to a temporary moratorium on the use of Tasers?

[1400]

Hon. J. Les: In making those kinds of decisions, we always need to come to a balanced point of view. If we were to immediately cease the use of Tasers in British Columbia, there is a very significant argument that we would in fact put public safety in jeopardy and certainly the safety, as well, of the police officers who serve us here in British Columbia.

It is not a decision to be taken lightly — whether or not we should allow the use of Tasers to continue. It is, in fact, a decision that means we should re-examine their use to make sure that they're being used as intended, appropriately, within the guidelines, so that the police will be able to use them in a way that keeps us all safe.

This entire investigation is more than about just the use of Tasers. Clearly, I would suggest, on the 14th of October there were many things that went wrong, and we need to focus on all of those issues in our quest to ensure that this type of thing does not happen again.

M. Karagianis: This issue is about the safety and protection of the police as well as it is about the public. On Friday the provincial police in Newfoundland and Labrador suspended their use of Tasers in response to the events taking place here in Vancouver at the airport. So I would ask the Solicitor General again: could we not follow the lead of Newfoundland and Labrador and call for a temporary moratorium on Taser use in the province of British Columbia?

Hon. J. Les: I believe I've already explained how the justice ministers across the country came to a considered position on this just on Friday of last week. The member, I'm sure, is interested in the fact that her federal leader supports the position of continuing the use of Tasers.

This is not a decision that is taken lightly; this is a decision that is taken in the public interest. But I am fully aware of the concern around the use of Tasers, and in that light, I have taken steps to ensure that this gets a full discussion at the earliest possible opportunity by the police chiefs of British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

M. Karagianis: I am impressed by the fact that the Solicitor General is taking his lead from the federal leader of the NDP.

However, an analysis by the Canadian Press has said that in eight out of ten cases, the RCMP have tasered people who were not carrying a gun. Tasers are meant to be used as a last resort. I believe the Solicitor General has made reference to that. But the tragedy in Vancouver and other incidents have shown that clearly, that is not happening. In fact, we are seeing in Metro Vancouver an increased use of Tasers.

Again, will the Solicitor General take leadership in this case here in British Columbia and call for a temporary moratorium here in B.C. right now until this case is resolved?

Hon. J. Les: Quite specifically how Tasers are used in British Columbia will likely be the first matter that will be reviewed by the commissioner under the public inquiry. There are many important aspects to the discussion about whether Tasers are used, in what circumstances they're used, how they're used, etc.

We expect all of those issues to be carefully, thoroughly and fully considered in the public inquiry. I think it's appropriate that we leave that discussion to that inquiry with, in the meantime, the police chiefs of British Columbia carefully considering the current guidelines and how they are being followed throughout the province.

TREATMENT OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN B.C.

C. Puchmayr: The B.C. Human Rights Tribunal just ruled against SELI Canada and SNC-Lavalin construction that it engaged in intimidation and retaliation against Central American workers. The panel ordered a

declaration that the company immediately cease and desist in these actions and pay costs, as set out in a ruling.

Is the Minister of Labour aware of other incidents of intimidation against foreign workers working in British Columbia?

[1405]

Hon. O. Ilich: We are aware of the accusations. The matter has gone before the Labour Relations Board, and that's where it's going to be properly deliberated upon.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

C. Puchmayr: The minister is not correct at all. This matter had been dealt with at the Labour Relations Board on another point. This matter is in front of the Human Rights Tribunal, not in front of the Labour Relations Board, and they have jurisdiction on this matter.

If the minister isn't aware of what the actual jurisdiction on this matter is, is the minister willing today to commit to this House to form a panel through her office and have worker representations and employer representations on that panel to ensure that foreign workers in British Columbia are being treated the same way they should be treated if they were British Columbia workers?

Hon. O. Ilich: The members opposite know that all foreign workers have exactly the same rights in British Columbia as any domestic worker. They have the same rights under WorkSafe. They have the same rights under the Labour Relations Code, and we have processes in place to deal with this.

REORGANIZATION OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT MINISTRY

N. Simons: A couple of weeks ago the Minister of Children and Families stood up in this House and, in defence of the failed regionalization process, started talking about the aboriginal process. My question to the minister is this: is he fully convinced that the first nations of this province are engaged in that aboriginal regionalization process, as he was two weeks ago?

Hon. T. Christensen: I'm wholly convinced that we're engaged in the most collaborative exercise with first nations in the history of this province to improve children's services to aboriginal children and families.

There are 203 first nations in British Columbia. It won't come as a surprise, I would hope, to any members in the opposition, certainly to members on the government side, that there are disagreements within the aboriginal community about appropriate approaches. But, certainly, the ministry remains very engaged with first nations, with the Métis Nation, with aboriginal organizations in how we can better serve aboriginal children and families right across the province.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

N. Simons: I'm not sure how the minister can say that with a straight face. The fact of the matter is clear to anyone who.... I suppose it should be clear to the minister himself. The minister received a letter in September in which representatives of 156 first nations who do child welfare in this province stated unequivocally.... Let me quote: "By formal resolution the forum strongly rejects the instructions, the aboriginal authorities acts and opposes the regionalization process."

After six years, after tens of millions of dollars thrown after this regionalization process, without the buy-in, how has it taken the minister this long to address the concerns of the first nations in this province to be part of this process? After six years and tens of millions of dollars — wasted money.

Hon. T. Christensen: Well, the member emphasizes one of the challenges. There is not consensus. Nor would I expect there will be consensus. But what we have done over the course of this last six years is work very closely with first nations, with aboriginal organizations, with friendship centres, with others across the province who have a sincere interest in how we can work together to better serve aboriginal children and families.

The members opposite are happy to show up and celebrate the successes — the establishment of an interim authority here on Vancouver Island, the establishment of an interim authority in the Fraser Valley. It would be helpful if the members would actually support the process of getting to a place where aboriginal children and families are better served.

[1410]

TREE FARM LICENCE LAND REMOVALS

J. Horgan: For weeks we on this side of the House have been raising the decision by the Minister of Forests to remove private lands from tree farm licences on Vancouver Island. Last week the capital regional district moved by doing first and second reading of a bylaw to downzone those lands. Following that courageous decision to show leadership on this issue by the CRD, the proponents threatened to, as I say, log the hell out of it.

My question is a simple one to the Minister of Forests. Now that he has allowed Western Forest Products to remove these lands from the protection of public tree farm licences, what assurances can he give the public that these lands won't be denuded in the interests of making his decision look like a good one?

Hon. R. Coleman: I stood in this House and told you the local government had input on this, and you disagreed, and evidently they do. You were upset that they would have an impact, so that's what the CRD has done. What the company has to decide now is what they will do with the lands or whether there's still a sale there. I don't know if there is or not.

The reality is...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. R. Coleman: ...that, you know, these lands can be logged. They can be logged under strict environmental standards, as the province of British Columbia has, and also under the Private Forest Land Act, which is also strict guidelines. The member should be aware of that and not now try to inflame a second issue on behalf of the people in the areas affected.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

J. Horgan: Well, it's interesting now that the Minister of Forests is defending municipal authorities and their rights to make decisions. Had he spoken to those municipal authorities before he made this decision, we wouldn't be in the mess we're in today. Had he believed in reconciliation and accommodation and spoken to the Beecher Bay band and the Pacheedaht First Nation in Port Renfrew, we wouldn't be in the mess we're in today.

My question, again, to the minister: what assurances can he give the public in southern Vancouver Island that these forest lands will not be denuded by Western Forest Products to make a political point?

Hon. R. Coleman: I know they have the right to log the lands under the Private Forest Land Act. I know that they have to meet strict environmental standards. I know that they sell their wood in international standards and have to have certified wood in order to do that, because their customers won't buy it.

I have some concerns about this, though, and the members opposite should know these concerns too. That is that the proceeds of this sale were going to essentially fund the rebuilding of three of the operations for Western Forest Products on Vancouver Island.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. R. Coleman: That would have gone a long way to preserving the long-term viability of the company and the 3,000 jobs that it has. I still believe it was the right decision.

I hope that the parties can work it out so the company will be stable and those jobs will be protected on Vancouver Island, and we can have a solid future for Western Forest Products and forestry in the province of British Columbia.

VANCOUVER CONVENTION CENTRE EXPANSION COSTS

N. Macdonald: Pages A6-A7 of *The Vancouver Sun* — two full pages of propaganda on the convention centre expansion project. This is purely political. This is not about marketing. There's nothing useful about those ads.

My question to the minister responsible is: how much did that cost, and who made the decision to place that propaganda?

Hon. S. Hagen: That certainly is not about propaganda. It's about sharing information with the public on the progress of this great project.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Just take your seat for a second.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Continue, Minister.

Hon. S. Hagen: If the opposition had been awake, they would know that VCCEP does this every six months to keep the public informed on what's going on.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.
[1415]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

N. Macdonald: This is a minister and an organization that have become completely indifferent to public funds. This is a minister that will spend for purely political reasons. It's propaganda. It is nothing else. It is not a report. It does not inform. The Auditor General's report informed. That informed; this does not.

How does the minister become so indifferent to the cost? Tell me precisely: how much did that cost, and could it not have been spent better?

Hon. S. Hagen: I get that the other side, the opposition, is against good news. But I'll tell you this. The only thing wrong with that ad is the picture, because if they had taken a picture from another view, we would have seen the three shrink-wrapped ferries sitting on the other side of the harbour.

GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

S. Simpson: Earlier this month the Pembina Institute released a report called *Mind the Gap*, looking at climate change in the province. In that report they identified that the provincial government will need to cut at least 36 million tonnes of greenhouse gases to meet commitments in the throne speech. The report also says: "Of those that we could count, we estimate the B.C. government commitments will result in almost five million tonnes of reductions — some 31 million tonnes short of the mark."

I know that both the Premier and the Minister of Environment have been critical in the media of this report. My question to the minister is: if he doesn't

think that this report is right, will he commit today to release this week all of the substantive data that proves this report is wrong?

Hon. B. Penner: Mr. Speaker, this being my first chance to address the House since I had some illness last spring, I'd just like to thank all members of the House for their cards and their phone calls and messages of goodwill. That went a long way.

I'd like to address the member's question, because it's a good one. I was also taken aback by the Pembina Institute's report because it appears that they did not pick up a copy of the government's energy plan released this spring or take a look at the Speech from the Throne. In fact, of the 20 recommendations in the Pembina Institute's report, we've already said that we're acting on or investigating 17 out of 20 of those recommendations.

In addition, we're looking at other actions, because we have set a very bold...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. B. Penner: ...and aggressive target, and we intend to follow through on that. Later this week I will be introducing legislation to put B.C.'s greenhouse gas emission reduction targets into law.

My challenge to the opposition is this. Will you work with us to get that law implemented and passed, or are you going to continue to filibuster and obstruct as you've done with other pieces of legislation?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Member has a supplemental.

S. Simpson: Well, maybe if this Premier and this minister, instead of going in the back rooms with cabinet secrecy, had put the legislative committee in place that we called for and had a real discussion with British Columbians, everybody would be cooperating with a solution instead of that.

The most compelling realization since last February is that the substance around these plans just doesn't match the rhetoric, and that's the problem. We had rhetoric in a throne speech. We had rhetoric in an energy plan. The substantive documents have not been produced.

The question again to the minister. If the minister truly believes that Pembina is wrong, then produce the real evidence, the real documents that show they're wrong. If you want action, you need real plans. We know from the convention centre that this government doesn't know how to make a plan.

[1420]

Hon. B. Penner: It's pretty hard to take advice from the NDP, because when they were in office, they tripled the greenhouse gas emissions from B.C.'s electrical sector.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. B. Penner: They increased B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions by 24 percent during their term in office. I'm sure that's why even their own NDP member, the member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, has said that the NDP didn't do a good job on greenhouse gas emissions in the 1990s.

We agree. That's where we're acting boldly. Very soon the members of the opposition will get a chance to put the money where their mouth is and see if they're going to support the legislation that we introduce or if they're going to continue to delay or dodge the vote altogether and hide in their office when the vote comes.

WAGES FOR CHILD CARE WORKERS

C. Trevena: Just about a week ago some substantial changes to child care regulations were introduced through an order-in-council. They caused uproar in the child care community, including in the family child care sector which it was supposed to help, because the child care community sees that these new regulations mean that there are going to be far fewer spaces than are presently available.

I'd like the Minister of State for Childcare to commit to this House that instead of cutting spaces, instead of putting money in bricks and mortar, she will put money into creating spaces through improving staff wages.

Hon. L. Reid: I am delighted to respond to this question. This government has an incredibly effective record when it comes to the creation of child care space in British Columbia. In the last round of capital, \$14½ million resulted in well over 1,400 spaces. In the current round of capital, \$12½ million will result in thousands of new spaces in British Columbia as we go forward.

In fact, the child care regulation around family child care.... We had centres that did not, frankly, utilize their entire allocation under the regulation. This change will allow each child care centre to have the maximum number of youngsters, which is seven, as we go forward. That is good news for British Columbia.

[End of question period.]

Point of Privilege

J. McIntyre: I rise to exercise my right on a point of privilege that I raised at the last sitting of the House on November 8. On that afternoon the member for Saanich South made unflattering remarks about my speech in the House earlier that afternoon on the hoist amendment the opposition raised for Bill 43. He said: "Now I recognize that she was in all probability having an episode in the House."

Now, we may have a difference of opinion on Bill 43, but to imply I have a medical condition is clearly beyond the bounds of normal debate. I was in my

office at the time, when I received a flurry of visits, calls and e-mails by a number of women and men in this House offended by the member's reference to me having an episode in the House.

The general consensus was that an episode implies irrationality, at a minimum. But further to that, many felt that a male member speaking passionately in this House would never have been accused of having an episode with all of the associated implications.

After this was brought to my attention, I watched a copy of the video for that member's remarks, read the *Blues*, and on reflection I believe the intent was clearly patronizing, denigrating to women and, at a minimum, unparliamentary. I also re-read my remarks in the House and believe that they are far from irrational and were meant to clarify exactly what's at stake with this proposed legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to provide a sincere apology for these remarks, and not only to me but to all female members on both sides of this House.

D. Cubberley: Let me say that it was never my intention to give the impressions that the member took from those remarks. If anything in my remarks offended the member, I sincerely apologize for those remarks and I withdraw them.

Petitions

C. Trevena: I have a petition with 44 signatures from the Royal Canadian Legion branch 198, Alert Bay, requesting smoking areas in the Legion.

[1425]

Orders of the Day

Hon. M. de Jong: I call continued second reading debate on Bill 43.

Second Reading of Bills

GREATER VANCOUVER TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT, 2007

(continued)

On the amendment (continued).

L. Krog: Hon. Speaker, I wish to offer an apology to the House. I made a grievous error in my remarks when we concluded here before the long weekend break. I referred to the old Chinese politburo.

Having reviewed my remarks this morning, I wish to correct myself and get it straight on the record that I was in fact referring to the old Soviet politburo, not the Chinese politburo, in reference to the remarks around the TransLink board and the proposals before this House. I certainly didn't want any of the members opposite to be under any misapprehension that I was somehow making fun of the Central Committee of the People's Congress of the Communist Party of China.

Hon. Speaker, the motion before the House, referred to in the common parlance as a hoist motion, is simply an offer to the government and to the minister to do the right thing. As I said on Thursday almost two weeks ago, what is being proposed is a very dramatic change to the way the whole transit system for the most substantial portion of our population will be operated.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

It's not as if the government hasn't had some good advice already as to how to govern TransLink. The member for Vancouver-Kensington, on May 29 in 2006, made a submission to the TransLink Governance Review Panel. It was good advice then, it's good advice now, and it's advice that I would recommend that the minister, who I know is listening carefully to my remarks today, would be wise to take.

The six-month hoist motion would give the government the opportunity to review all of the decisions and all of the considerations around this. There were some basic recommendations made in that submission by the member for Vancouver-Kensington, who was then our Transportation critic, which were pretty sensible.

One is a recommendation that no consideration be given to a TransLink governance structure which includes board members who have not been elected by the residents of the Greater Vancouver regional district. Instead, the bill before the House is exactly the opposite. There is no democratic election of the members of the board.

If we go to the bill, the bill itself is pretty clear. We have the screening panel, which is composed of unelected parties who get to draw up this list of 15 qualified individuals. They in turn submit to the mayors' council this list of 15 qualified individuals, who will never have faced any election or any screening process by the public per se. They submit that list, from which the mayors' council then has to pick nine individuals.

As I said before, it's like Ferdinand Marcos proposing: "You know, I've got 15 cousins, and you pick nine of them, and that's very democratic." I would suggest it's anything but democratic. The recommendation made by the member for Vancouver-Kensington was common sense; consistent with democracy; consistent with the right of the people who are going to be served by the transit system; but even more importantly, consistent with the rights of the people who will be paying for the transit system to actually have a voice in the selection of the governing body that will run the transit system.

[1430]

I would have thought that in 2007 that would not be seen as a novel concept. I would have thought that in 2007 the government wouldn't need, as we suggest on this side of the House, another six months to come to that very basic conclusion about how you govern a transit system.

The second recommendation was even more salient: "...that TransLink policy decisions be made by elected representatives at the GVRD. The GVRD has responsibility for land use policy in the region. Land use policy and transportation policy are inextricably

linked. The current separation of these two functions is an artificial one and can be remedied by situating the regional transportation policy decision-makers within the GVRD framework." Gosh, can you think of anything more logical?

We are dealing today in this province with the problems that arose out of the transportation system which most of us have come to rely on, and that is the automobile. It is the basis of our difficulties that we are facing — whether it comes to the densification of our communities or the creation of transit systems. The whole planning structure revolves around the automobile and its historical influence on our patterns of development and growth and population development.

So this recommendation, which the government, if it took the six months offered to it, if you will, would have a chance to reconsider.... I submit it would come to the logical conclusion that, surely, the bodies that govern the municipalities of the lower mainland should be the same bodies that have control over the transportation system that will serve the literally millions of British Columbians who live in that part of our province. It is not a remarkable suggestion.

Indeed, it is so commonsense that I haven't heard mayors in Vancouver and regional and municipal politicians in that area say it's a bad suggestion. They understand its logic. They understand its importance.

The third recommendation is "that the TransLink board be made up of 17 regional representatives, one provincial MLA from the region appointed by the provincial government and one federal MP from the region appointed by the federal government. While we do not at this time make a recommendation regarding a specific structure of a newly constituted TransLink board operating within the GVRD, we have some preliminary ideas in this regard and would be more than pleased to discuss them."

Now, there's a very commonsense suggestion. A 17-person board, not unreasonable; a provincial MLA representing the government interest and a federal Member of Parliament appointed by the federal government. Clearly, the federal government will be asked to contribute and is being asked to contribute to transit and transportation within the Greater Vancouver regional district.

I come back to the point: why won't the government do it? What could possibly be wrong with that suggestion? Why would the government not want to take an opportunity in the next six months to come to this conclusion? The world and the transportation system in the lower mainland will not collapse overnight.

This bill talks about a 30-year plan. If the government is expecting, through this legislation, to grant to this body the power to make 30-year plans which will have ramifications for generations, surely it's not too much to suggest to the government six months to reconsider this bill — to come back in the spring and put forward a governance structure which is democratic, which is consistent with that which we all in this House hold dear, and which is our democratic way of life.

Surely it's not unreasonable, and I ask the government to consider it.

H. Bains: It is my privilege and I'm actually honoured to stand here to speak on this hoist motion. I think it only makes sense. When we are talking about a major piece of legislation that will actually alter the way we govern for almost half the population of British Columbia, I think it only makes sense that we should give this a sober second thought.

[1435]

This hoist bill will provide us that opportunity. It will provide for the minister to go back, take a second look and make a decision that will be good for the population that this one covers.

I will talk about why this sober second thought is needed. We're looking at this bill, Bill 43. As it sits, it talks about making changes to the structure of TransLink and how they make decisions and how they make decisions on behalf of British Columbians in the lower mainland — how they would be funding those activities. I think these are major, major decisions. It's a major decision to revisit, I think, or to look at how we govern in those areas.

First of all, when we talk about, in this day and age.... We want more democracy, not less. When we talk about democratic deficit, we need to talk about how we improve democracy in our decision-making process here in this House and all the other institutions and governing bodies that actually dictate the lives of British Columbians.

I think this bill, if it's left the way it is, actually takes away the elements that currently exist in TransLink. Any board or governing body that you look at always needs improvement. There's no question about that. We should always be looking at improving so that it is geared towards the benefit of the public. But this thing goes backward. This one will not provide any improvement in that process. In fact, it will take us backward when we talk about being democratic and being accountable to the public.

Those are the cornerstones of a democratic society. Those are the cornerstones of how we became the best country in this part of the world. When we look at the changes in Bill 43 as they are proposed, I think they are really scary, and I think it will really concern many British Columbians out there.

Let's talk about some of those changes that are being proposed here. Let's talk about how this process will be more undemocratic than it is in the status quo today. Under this proposal, there are nine directors. They will be appointed by the minister and by the business interests. Basically, those two bodies that exist here are the government and the business interests — and not only that, only Vancouver businesses.

When you look at the makeup of the selection board, the selection board clearly talks about the Vancouver Board of Trade being on that panel.

Mr. Speaker, I come from Surrey. The minister is in my neighbouring constituency. I think this is a clear slap in the face of those communities that we represent. Why not a representative, if that's the route you want to go? Where's the representation from Surrey Board of Trade? None whatsoever. Where's the representation from labour, the workers' side?

I think it lacks quite a bit in the makeup of those panels, even if the minister wanted to talk about that. But that's not the real issue. The real issue is what powers these directors would have. They are actually running the board. They have real powers. The council of mayors, basically, are just there to oversee their activities. I think that is not a way to go.

When you're looking at these directors making all those decisions and who actually appoints them, I think it's a clear message to British Columbians that the minister is somehow telling us that he doesn't want a democracy to get in the way of him having his way in how he wants to make those decisions around TransLink.

I think that is sad. I don't think that's the way we want to do it. I don't think that should be the way the government should be run. I don't think that's how the decision should be made in our democratic society. So I think it's a bad way of going. Like I said before, we need to give it a sober second thought so that we could go back, take six months and really listen to the public — listen to those people who actually will be affected by this decision.

[1440]

Going ahead the way this bill actually sits is completely undemocratic, as I said, and many speakers have said that before me. There are hardly any community representatives on that selection board. So when you dig deep and really look at how this board will be run and how the decisions will be made, they will be made by appointed people, not elected people.

Coming with that — as undemocratic as that is going to be — is that there's no accountability. Who are they accountable to?

Right now the board consists of representatives from communities all around the lower mainland. They are accountable to their people. They have to go back and explain the positions that they take on this board and how that decision benefits that particular community. These nine directors have accountability to no one, not to Surrey and not to the minister's community — only to the minister it seems, the way it is put here.

I think that is a wrong way of doing it in a democratic society. Like I said earlier, I think we need to increase democracy — not lessen it, as the minister is proposing.

When we are talking about being undemocratic, it also brings that real issue of accountability. That's where I think we are really, as elected officials, held accountable by our constituents for our positions that we take either here or outside. We need to go and face them during election times. We need to go and face them when we are in our communities, but these nine directors don't have to go anywhere to face no one and be accountable to no one. That is a real tragedy in my view. I don't think we should go there.

For example, the mayor of Surrey is talking about the need for 500 buses which that community needs right now. You think these nine directors will be talking about that? I don't think so. The Surrey mayor and the representative from Surrey council will be talking about those because they know. Because they live in that community, they know what's needed in that

community. I think that's where real accountability comes, because it comes from the grass roots. The needs of that community come from the grass roots.

When you have a panel that consists of the Vancouver Board of Trade.... They will not be looking at the interests of Surrey. Only elected representatives who are accountable to Surrey and to the constituents of Surrey will actually be accountable and will be making decisions that are needed for that particular community.

Now, I could sit here and say: well, many people — all those nine so-called experts — are supposed to look at the needs of the region. With all good intentions, they may do that. But if you're not in that particular community, you will never be as passionate. You will never know the real needs of that community unless you live in that community. That's where you hear those issues. That's where you see those issues. That's where you feel those issues.

I think that is a real problem in this. When you're reading the way the makeup is going to be, it's really troubling. The real power in the new TransLink will rest with the board of directors, which is selected by the government and business interests such as the Minister of Transportation, chartered accountants, Vancouver Board of Trade and the Gateway Council.

When you're looking at the makeup of the selection panel, there will be a bias from those people who actually will be sitting on the selection board to think more closely of the constituents that they represent. For example, the Vancouver Board of Trade will be looking at what's good for Vancouver and what's good for Vancouver businesses — not so much what's good for businesses in Surrey, because they're in competition.

I think there is a flaw in the makeup of that selection board to begin with. There's a flaw in the way this board will run. That's where the serious problems start to come from because one board, basically appointed by the minister, is going to make all those decisions with all those powers.

[1445]

They will do all the day-to-day planning, and the mayors' council will vote only on the options proposed by the directors. What's more is that the directors will write the initial policy of the transportation authority without requiring ratification by the mayors. That is a serious concern.

Furthermore, the first board of directors is being chosen through an ad hoc method set up by the Minister of Transportation in Bill 43 and will ratify the results, whatever they are. They'll just ratify them.

The long-term plan. If you want to talk about a long-term plan.... I just want to advise this House that the four mayors from Surrey, Langley, Abbotsford and Coquitlam got together just a few weeks ago. They are worried, actually, about how to manage the growth in that particular area. They are saying that there will be 500 new residences moving to those four cities in the next 25 years, and they need, therefore, to manage that growth.

How do we link those communities with our transportation system? Where are the businesses going to be

located, where are the residences going to be, and how do they commute from those two entities? I think they are far ahead of this government in looking ahead to see what is needed for that region.

These nine directors appointed basically by the minister will not be looking at that. They will not be looking at that. It will be the representative of Surrey who will be sitting, as they sit on the boards today.... They are actually the real people, people with the real issues, people that actually know those issues from the region. They are promoting them.

The long-term, 30-year plan. The strategic plan. The first ten-year base plan will become the status quo of the transportation planning. They will define levels of service, capital projects and revenue sources such as taxes, fares, tolls and expenditures. The board of directors is required to engage in public consultation. It requires regional land use objectives, provincial and regional environmental objectives, anticipated population growth and economic development.

What is really sad about all of that consultation is that they're not required to actually abide by any of these consultations or considerations. How is that democratic, and how is that representative of the needs of the public in those particular areas? That is a serious reason why the minister should give a sober second thought so that we go back for six months and take a real look at what we are actually doing and revisit our decisions. I think the decision that is being made under Bill 43 is wrong. We can come back with a decision that actually is working, is democratic and is accountable.

With that, I strongly urge the minister and that side of the House to seriously consider this hoist motion and give us six months to go back and take a look at the issues at hand. When you're talking about this government appointing people on the board.... You know what? It sent chills through my spine, and it will send chills through many other people's spines out there who actually are looking at who those people might be.

It seems to me that the first thing that will come to mind will perhaps be: "Here are more jobs for Liberal friends, insiders." The names — such as Mr. Ken Dobell, Paul Taylor — that we've heard before, the defeated Liberal candidates and the past Liberal presidents come to mind. They were also appointed on some other board called the convention centre board. Look what they got us into.

They were supposed to be so-called experts. But the Auditor General was very clear that there was no expertise on that board. Is that the direction we want to go with these nine directors? Is that going to be another place for Liberal friends and insiders to find some jobs? That is a scary thought.

[1450]

Look at the mess they've gotten us in at the convention centre. Are we going to see more of that at TransLink? Here we are talking about huge bucks, authority to raise taxes, authority to set fares, spend our money, talk about a long-term transportation plan. We cannot afford to make mistakes in those areas. We cannot.

This is a pretty fast-growing community in the lower mainland. If we want to avoid what is going on in other metropolitan areas in the world like Houston and other places, we better be right, because we're still a growing community. We need to make those decisions so that we know that the plans we are going to put in place are without any political interference and are for the right reasons.

When we are appointing our friends on these boards, that objectivity sometimes is taken away. That is a serious risk when we are talking about having to have these folks who could be just the friends of some minister or friends of one particular party in here and appoint them. I think that is wrong, and I don't think we need to go there.

Now, having said all of that, I could say that I'm not standing here just taking shots at the plan. There were some recommendations made by the critic on this side. They were very reasonable, practical recommendations — nine of them. I think if we go back and agree with this hoist motion, which I'm sure that side of the House is seriously looking at it now, and reconsider their position... I hope they do, because it does make sense. Here we are talking about an entity that has more resources and more power than many municipalities in this province. They have bigger budgets than many municipalities. They have a bigger responsibility than many municipalities out there.

I'm sure that the minister is seriously thinking about going back for six months and reconsidering his position, consulting with the public, consulting with those communities. They are actually crying out for consultation, which the minister isn't giving them — that opportunity.

Another thing he could do is look at these recommendations that were made by our critic — our very capable critic, I might add. He put together nine of them, and I think all of them make sense. They were put together by a lot of consultation with many people around the lower mainland, and they came back with the very commonsense, practical recommendations that I think will do the job.

The first recommendation, for example, is: "We recommend that no consideration be given to a TransLink governance structure which includes board members who have not been elected by residents of the GVRD." A commonsense proposal, a democratic proposal. We're talking about increasing, improving democratic process, not taking democracy away. This is a proper recommendation to do that.

The second one:

"We recommend that the TransLink policy decisions be made by elected representatives at the GVRD. The GVRD has responsibility for land use policy in the region. Land use policy and transportation policy are inextricably linked. The current separation of these two functions is an artificial one and can be remedied by situating the original transportation policy decision-makers within the GVRD framework."

Again, a good recommendation.

The third one:

"We recommend that the TransLink board be made up of 17 regional representatives, one provincial MLA

from the region appointed by the provincial government and one federal MP from the region, appointed by the federal government. While we do not at this time make a recommendation regarding the specific structure of a newly constituted TransLink board operating within the GVRD, we have some preliminary ideas in this regard and would be more than pleased to discuss them if the panel chooses to move in this direction."

[1455]

Again, I think it makes all the sense in the world that we will be talking to our federal counterparts for their assistance. But right now there's no provision in this minister's lack of vision for the makeup of the new board. I'm sure we'll always need federal dollars. We need their support, because we are talking about major money, major capital projects and the decisions around them by that board.

The other one, again, is a really good recommendation.

"We recommend that TransLink continue to function as an operating company with a structure that requires it to follow the policy of strategic decisions of the new TransLink governing body within the GVRD. While we do not at this time make a recommendation regarding the specific structure of a newly constituted TransLink operating company, we have some preliminary ideas in this regard and would be happy to discuss them if the panel chooses to adopt such a view."

Again, if we have the six-month period to go around and reconsider our position, here we have some ideas that we can present to the minister and to whoever is listening that will address the issue at hand.

The next one was:

"We recommend that a non-elected representative — such as those with the relevant business, union, environmental and other expertise — be consulted in an ongoing way at both the operating company and the policy-making levels. This might include independent non-voting directors on subsidiary committees and boards but would exclude any representation on policy-making structure."

Here's the key, as I said earlier. You want to be inclusive. In a democratic system you want to include everyone, because the more ideas, the better. Right now the minister has confined himself just to Vancouver.

The Vancouver Board of Trade will be on that selection panel — not Burnaby, not Surrey. Surrey is the fastest-growing community, and it will be the largest city in the region, in the province in just a few years. I think the minister has forgotten that. We need representation on that board, and I think it's just an oversight by the minister. He will revisit his decision. I'm sure he wants to have some representation from the Surrey Board of Trade.

He wants to have representation from the workers who work in this region or from their representatives or both. I think that's what's needed. Workers who will actually make those plans work aren't even talked to, aren't even listened to in this process. How could that happen? There's no mention of the workers or workers' representations putting their briefs in, to have them on the selection board.

It's not an inclusive approach; it's an exclusive approach. Decisions will be made by the Vancouver Board of Trade and the minister together in a board-

room someplace — a very nicely furnished boardroom, I might add, that the workers, most of the time, aren't even allowed to walk into. But I think those workers need to be heard.

The community representatives need to be heard. They are the ones who will actually be paying for all of this. They are the ones who will be suffering if any mistakes are made.

I can sit here and bet my bottom dollar that the minister knows — I hope he knows — that mistakes will be made if he goes through with this process. Those mistakes will be irreversible, because once you go that route and those billion-dollar decisions are made, you can't reverse them that easily.

Once you start to plan in the fastest-growing community and once you make plans for where the businesses will be located, where the residences will be located, what kind of transportation plan we will have to link them together.... Once you make those decisions, you can't change them. It would be very difficult and very, very expensive.

That actually scares me, because this government is known to make those expensive mistakes. We've seen them — the \$400 million at the convention centre. We've seen them, and they were made by those people who were appointed by this government, not elected by anybody. They were not accountable to anyone, and no one has been held accountable since we found out that they blew \$400 million in cost overruns at the convention centre.

I think there is a serious issue here, because mistakes will be made, and now is an opportunity to do it right. This motion will take us in that direction, give us time to revisit this decision on Bill 43 and come back with the right decisions.

[1500]

Here's another really good recommendation that my colleague made. I might add that it was made after thorough consultation with a lot of people involved. This is number 6. "We recommend that municipal representatives to the newly structured GVRD TransLink board be chosen for three-year terms corresponding to the municipal election calendar and that provincial and federal representatives be appointed in a manner that would maximize continuity."

What a commonsense approach. It's a great proposal, a great idea, but I don't know if the minister has actually even seen or read these nine recommendations. If he did, he didn't follow them. Certainly, he didn't follow them.

If the minister goes through our proposal of giving ourselves six months.... I'm sure he'll have time to go through these, if he hasn't done that yet. I have a hunch that the minister hasn't seen them. If he has seen them, he hasn't actually considered them seriously.

Now is our opportunity, Mr. Minister — a serious opportunity. We'll send you a copy of this. We'll sit down with you and explain to you how it works.

In six months.... Actually, we may not need six months. If the minister actually wants to get serious, sit down with us. We'll explain. I'll go on my knees and ask my colleague. I'm sure that he will be happy to accept our recommendation or request that he come, sit

down with the minister and explain what actually is behind these nine recommendations so that he understands fully how these can be put into practice. It doesn't take long if you really want to do it.

Mr. Minister, I know, is paying very careful attention to what's being said in this House, because this is a serious issue. He would consider our recommendation. He would go back and, hopefully by the end of today, could stand up here in this House and say: "We are withdrawing Bill 43. We are actually looking at...."

Interjection.

H. Bains: Well, the second-best thing the minister can do is agree with this hoist motion. Give us six months to go over and talk about commonsense, practical solutions to a really complex problem that we have here.

Mr. Speaker, I'll give you another one. "We recommend that the GTVA Act provision which requires TransLink transportation planning be compatible with the livable region strategic plan be continued, irrespective of the panel's ultimate recommendation regarding TransLink governance."

Here again is a really good, commonsense proposal. A lot of people going through that livable region strategic plan put in a lot of time and energy. A lot of consultation went into it, and they spent a lot of time on this. We're saying again: take a look at that so that we are not working against what actually makes sense in addressing the issues we have in the lower mainland.

Recommendation 8: "We recommend that the Minister of Transportation establish a regular schedule of meetings with the TransLink board." How could you go wrong with that recommendation? The minister actually talking to people who are making decisions. I think it just makes a lot of sense for the minister to simply go over there, sit down, have a cup of coffee and say: "Look, folks, how are things going? What kind of decisions are you making? Where can I come in and help you all with it?"

I hope the minister will actually listen to these recommendations and will agree with this hoist motion.

[1505]

H. Lali: I take my place in this debate on what is called colloquially the hoist motion. It is also known as the motion for the government to sort of take a bit of time off and have a sober second thought in terms of what it is they're really trying to do, to have a closer look at what their proposed....

Deputy Speaker: Member, I'm sorry. I'm going to have to interrupt you and ask for another speaker. You've already spoken on the hoist amendment.

[1510]

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Mr. Speaker: Hon. Members, the question is that Bill 43 be not read a second time now but that it be read a second time six months hence.

Amendment negatived on the following division:

YEAS — 27

Brar	S. Simpson	Fleming
Farnworth	James	Kwan
Ralston	Cubberley	Hammell
Coons	Puchmayr	Gentner
Routley	Fraser	Horgan
Lali	Dix	Bains
Robertson	Karagianis	Evans
Chudnovsky	Chouhan	Wyse
Sather	Macdonald	Conroy

NAYS — 38

Falcon	Reid	Coell
Ilich	Christensen	Les
Richmond	Bell	Roddick
Hayer	Lee	Jarvis
Nuraney	Whittred	Cantelon
Thorpe	Hagen	Oppal
de Jong	Taylor	Bond
Hansen	Abbott	Penner
Coleman	Hogg	Sultan
Bennett	Lekstrom	Mayencourt
Polak	Hawes	Yap
Bloy	MacKay	Black
McIntyre		Rustad

On the main motion.

M. Sather: We all recall the genesis of Bill 43 back when the RAV line was being contemplated by municipal decision-makers, who at that time had the power to make decisions. The minister has decided in his infinite wisdom that they, I guess, aren't capable of doing that. So he has ridden in on his white or black horse — whichever colour you might choose....

[1515]

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Just take your seat for a second while members attend to other duties.

Member for Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows continues.

M. Sather: The minister has decided that he is going to completely change the way that local decision-making is made in the lower mainland and the Metro Vancouver region from a process that was driven by local leaders in their communities — the mayors of the various municipalities, who had gotten together over the years to make those decisions.

I certainly have had some difficulties with TransLink. I think everybody has had their differences at one time or another with TransLink. It's a complex organization to run. I think that the fact that we had that local decision-making....

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

Sometimes it was said by opponents — I heard it in my community, actually — that these folks were unelected. Truly, they weren't elected as TransLink members, but they were elected by their community as decision-makers and as the leaders of their community. Therefore, they had that authority behind them, and they had that legitimacy behind them. I think that was really important to the authenticity of the decisions that they made.

But the minister had his hissy fit. He was freaked out about the direction it was going with RAV line — or, to wit, that it wasn't going. So he repeatedly invoked the power that he has to force those municipal decision-makers to change their minds on the RAV line.

That is certainly unfortunate for my community of Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows, because although we have a very good system in the West Coast Express, it's limited by track time that it can get from the major railways. Therefore, people can go to work in the morning if they're going to Vancouver and coming back, and it's very good for them. But if they're going to other municipalities.... Before I got this job and I worked for the Fraser Health Authority and I worked in Burnaby, the train didn't stop in Burnaby, so it was limited in that respect.

We need more transit in our area. We know in Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows that we don't yet have the size to perhaps warrant a new rapid transit line right now, a dedicated 24-seven, but we definitely needed and continue to need more services such as the Evergreen line — or whichever name folks tend to want to choose for it — that would run from Coquitlam Centre to Lougheed Mall. That would connect with a lot of other areas that are serviced by the SkyTrain system.

But the minister said no. He said no to the GVRD. At the time he said that that's not what we're going to do. We're going to do the RAV line. So the RAV line was pushed down the throats of local decision-makers, much to the dismay of commuters in my area and, I know, in the Tri-Cities area as well. And to this day we have no firm commitment from the government that they're going to in fact fund the Evergreen line and that we're going to see it in any sort of timely manner. That's a great concern for us.

We know that the minister's and this government's commitments, the contractual obligations that they've embarked on — something in the neighbourhood of a billion dollars this year — are considerable, and although they may not go on the books as debt, they're going to come out of taxpayers' pockets. So the ability for us to be able to move freely, through improved transit, is not up to what it should be.

Also, the minister, as he's known to do and known to be, is rather provocative. I think his characterization of the local decision-makers — the mayors of the Metro

Vancouver area — was most unfortunate in describing them as parochial and their interests as being parochial.

[1520]

I guess if you're a mayor, like longstanding Mayor Don MacLean of Pitt Meadows, who I think served well on the TransLink board.... Although, as far as I'm aware, his provincial persuasions politically are more in line with the minister's than with mine, he challenged the minister around issues like the RAV line. He was right at the front of the list, I think, of those that were considered parochial — not like the sophisticated minister for Surrey-Cloverdale.

The minister is saying we're now going to have a professional TransLink. We hear these words a lot from this government. It's either "professional" or "science-based" or words of that ilk. Are they in fact, though, going to be better for the people of the Metro Vancouver region? That's the question.

They're not going to be elected either, as we know, so how is their responsibility to the people of my region going to be any greater than what we already had? Are they going to provide more open and honest government? Is the minister invoking more open and honest government? That's another refrain that we hear from this government — how open and honest they are. But what assurances can we have that this is actually going to be a more open and honest process and reflective of open and honest government, any more than what we've seen already?

We have reasons, of course, to be concerned, to doubt that this government in fact is going to be open and honest about its transactions and that it's going to be inclusive, particularly of regional and municipal concerns.

We look at some of the legislation that's happened already. Bill 75 basically said: "If we want to do it — if we want a major project and the province says we're going to do it, notwithstanding anything that those parochial people in the regions or in the municipalities or in the cities say — it's going to go ahead."

Similarly, we saw the objections that the Squamish-Lillooet regional district had about some independent power producers in its area. After being very open to inviting many of those, they said no to one on the Ashlu. The government came in, again heavy-handedly, with Bill 30, saying: "Sorry, you have no more decisions over Crown lands in your regional districts. Stay away. These are projects that we want, and we're going to get them."

Again, we see that here. It's that heavy-handedness this government tends to invoke when they set about to do business.

When you are autocratic — I don't think it's too strong a word — in the way you do business, you don't engender a feeling of inclusiveness and collaboration amongst the partners. I don't think it's any secret that there are more Liberal members of local government than there are NDP members. You see them — the local governments — being concerned about how their government, this government, is treating them. If this is the way the government treats its friends, you have to wonder.

You saw that again with TILMA. It's just roughshod, full square ahead. Never mind what the municipalities say. So these municipalities gave a very resounding response to this government during the Union of B.C. Municipalities meetings, saying: "Whoa. No, we don't like this show, and it's time to hold up." But this government doesn't. They're full steam ahead.

The minister leads the charge in this government, as far as I can see, in terms of being straightforward. Bullheaded might be another adjective that could be used. Certainly, he has drawn the ire of a lot of folks in this province.

When we look at this particular structure around the new TransLink apparatus.... What is the minister's view of open, honest and democratic government, as reflected in this bill?

[1525]

There's a five-person screening panel that was set up this summer to choose the board of directors. That was remarkable in itself. We didn't have any legislation at that time giving the government or the minister real authority to proceed with this structure. But not to let that slow him down, the minister went ahead anyway, just as they are doing with TILMA, without any recourse to the Legislature.

That's not a good precedent. That's not one that any of us wants to see in an open and honest and democratic government, which this government professes to be. And yet we see that happening over and over again.

The screening panel that was set up. They had one choice each. There was a choice by the minister, the mayors' council for the region, the Chartered Accountants of British Columbia, the Vancouver Board of Trade and the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council.

Who did they choose? Let's have a look. They chose Mr. Graham Clarke. He's the governor of the Vancouver Board of Trade. They chose Dave Park, who I've had the pleasure of speaking with a number of times. He's the chief economist with the Vancouver Board of Trade. They chose R.V. Wilds, managing director of the Gateway Council; Hugh Lindsay of the chartered accountants; and Mike Harcourt, chosen by the regional mayors.

We have the chartered accountants choosing a chartered accountant. We have the Vancouver Board of Trade choosing somebody from the Vancouver Board of Trade, or it certainly looks like they chose their own. We have the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council choosing one of their folks, and then you have the minister chipping in — it looks like, by a matter of deduction — choosing another person from the Vancouver Board of Trade. Surprise, surprise. They chose their own to run this process.

How can anyone be surprised — and the minister certainly shouldn't be surprised — that the impression very clearly is that this is his structure, that this TransLink now belongs to the minister? Notwithstanding, I know the minister will go on and on about how this government doesn't interfere, and he's going to have a professional board here, and he's going to be hands-off from here on in.

If you look simply at who they chose and how they chose them.... It's easy enough, if you get all the people

that you want on a board, and on such an important board as this, to then say: "Oh boy, let them go and do their thing. I won't interfere."

I expect the minister feels pretty confident of the outcome of their deliberations. I expect he's certainly not going to be looking for any more parochial decisions, like we saw with those nasty mayors who didn't want to do the RAV line.

We're hopeful on this side of the House that the minister will reconsider. We had a hoist motion because we consider this very important, and that's why we're speaking now to the main part of this bill. Although the minister and the government have the power, no doubt, to ram this through, I think they should consider long and hard what the consequences will be down the road.

If you don't have the full buy-in of those people that are on the ground, those local government decision-makers, the chances are that it's going to run off the rails, so to speak. The minister, we can only hope, is listening carefully, and we'll choose to look at what he's doing.

We can see that the minister.... I don't know if he has much experience in running business, but he certainly knows who his friends are, and that's who he's chosen to be on this panel. At least, if they're not his friends, I certainly expect that they're the Premier's friends.

[1530]

Interjection.

M. Sather: Precisely.

The nine-member board of directors chosen by the screening panel — what is their mandate? What will they be doing to discharge their duties? They are required to consider, but only to consider, regional land use objectives. They're not required to abide by them.

Well, that's of real concern to me because there are a number of very important processes happening in the lower mainland right now, and the outcome of these is going to determine what our region looks like for decades to come. It's going to have a very large impact, too, on the important issue of controlling greenhouse gases.

At this time Metro Vancouver is going through a process of reconsidering the livable region strategic plan, which was put together in the '90s by the mayors of the region to balance the need to contain growth in regional centres, to densify growth so that transit is effective and to prevent unending urban sprawl.

This board of directors in this era of climate change, when we know it's exceedingly important that we get cars off the road and we get people using transit, will only be considering issues like the livable region strategic plan or whatever replaces it. They're not required to abide by any of the regional land use and growth decisions that are being made by those that are charged with doing that.

So how do the two tie together? You've got the minister and the government off on their own now doing TransLink. Then, on the other hand, you've got the elected mayors and councils that are trying to deal with the whole issue of regional land use planning.

One of the things that's also being looked at right now at the Metro Vancouver level is the green zone. There's a movement afoot there. It looks like it's going to go through or has gone through that the green zone is going to be amended, or there will be a formula amended to make it easier to remove land from the green zone.

There again, that is a policy which is completely significant and important to what our communities will look like in the future and how we will address the crucial issue of controlling urban sprawl and, therefore, dealing with the global warming issue. The more sprawl we have, the more cars we're going to have on the road and the more greenhouse gases that are going to be emitted.

I understand there's also a draft order-in-council by the minister responsible to approve the amendment to the green zone — all issues that are at odds with the government's stated intention to fight global warming, to be the most environmental government bar none in North America. Lots of talk, but when we look for concrete action, we find that it's lacking. We find that it's lacking in a considerable degree.

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

So there's no motivation for this board to consider the environmental costs of transportation choices. There's certainly no requirement. To consider something is just far too weak, and I think the minister wanted it that way. He doesn't want to be constrained. He's made it really clear that he doesn't want to be constrained in any way by the decisions of mayors and councils in the cities and municipalities in the Metro Vancouver area. In the course of doing that, he is embarking upon a policy that is very anti-environmental in the process.

The "minister of sprawl" is going to be presiding over the way things are looking with the unfolding of TransLink the way he sees it, with the emphasis on cars and the lack of emphasis on transit. It's only going to be encouraging more and more sprawl, and I think that's really shameful in this day and age.

[1535]

I wonder if this professional board is going to be doing a better job on projects in my community than the previous board did. Right now TransLink is building the Golden Ears bridge in my community, which is supported by my community. It's a good thing. But look at the money that's being spent on that.

We talk about the convention centre, and truly it's a horrific cost overrun — millions and millions and hundreds of millions of dollars. Well, the Golden Ears bridge is running at \$600 million over budget — \$600 million. That's a P3; that's a public-private partnership. I see the minister shaking his head.

Hon. K. Falcon: That's a ridiculous number.

M. Sather: "It's a ridiculous number," the minister says. "Where did you ever come up with that?"

Interjections.

M. Sather: It is. It's totally ridiculous. It's totally ridiculous that it should be costing \$1.12 billion when the cost of that bridge was said to be \$600 million. I couldn't agree more with the minister. It's totally ridiculous.

But let's look at some of the people who are giving this figure that the minister says is absolutely ridiculous. Here is the project....

Interjection.

M. Sather: Madam Speaker, I know that the minister has some problems with the facts, but he'll just listen up, because he.... I don't know whether he considers Fred Cummings....

Interjections.

M. Sather: The minister refuses to listen. What's new? Here we have a display right now in this House, Madam Speaker. The minister is afraid to listen. Well, I'm going to say it anyway, whether he's listening or not.

Project director Fred Cummings. Fred Cummings is the guy who is.... I don't know. Maybe he isn't a professional, according to the minister. I don't know if the minister appointed him, so maybe he doesn't count as a professional, but he's the director of the project. He said: "The entire project will cost about a billion dollars." Now, if you....

Interjections.

M. Sather: The life of the contract — precisely. So who's going to pay? I ask, Madam Speaker....

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Order. Order, Members.

M. Sather: Who is going to pay? It's too bad the minister is no longer listening. The fact of the matter is that the people of British Columbia are going to be paying for this project. They're going to be paying, and as I said before, if it's not out of the left pocket, it's out of the right pocket.

Here's what the law firm Davis LLP said about the Golden Ears bridge. This is a law firm established in Vancouver in 1892, and their major transactions in 2006 included representing Golden Crossing General Partnership and Bilfinger Berger BOT Inc. in the \$1.1 billion Golden Ears public-private partnership. So they know, because they're the ones that did the deal. They know how much it costs, and that's how much people are going to be paying for that bridge under this government.

The Minister of Finance has spoken about her love for P3s, so I wonder if she's looking at things like the Golden Ears bridge. We could talk about the Abbotsford hospital, but I digress. When I look at what has happened in my community with regard to the Abernethy connector to the Golden Ears bridge.... I talked to the minister about this.

We know that TransLink did not act appropriately in the case of Formosa Nursery. We know that they bulldozed their agricultural lands, that they didn't consider their rights, that they haven't dealt with them fairly and that they're continuing to look at alienating further lands — if you can believe it — on that property for another project.

This one the minister, I think, will have to end up owning himself if it happens. It's called the North Lougheed connector. When I talked to the minister about that project, he said: "Well, I'm not going to be responsible for a screwup by TransLink."

[1540]

I'm going to ask, then, if the minister — and I will ask for his commitment — is going to ensure that projects are done in an entirely different manner. Is this professional board going to do projects that take into account agriculture, or are they just going to bulldoze through the middle of an agricultural operation — in this case an organic blueberry operation — to have their way?

I'm sorry to say that I'm not confident that the minister is going to be any more sensitive. Sensitivity is not one of the....

An Hon. Member: Or sensible.

M. Sather: Or sensible, as the member says.

Neither, I think, are strong points of the minister, so I don't have a lot of confidence. I'm eternally optimistic and hopeful that business will be done differently by these friends of the Premier, but I'm not at all convinced that that will be the case.

If we look — I know we had a long discussion about it, and I'll only mention it in passing — at the land alienation that happened as a result of the Tsawwassen treaty and the land alienation that's happening because of the Gateway program now in Delta.... Is this board, which was put in place by the minister, going to be more sensitive to the needs of agriculture as they move on these projects? Is the minister going to be? I don't see the evidence of it, so I am concerned about the direction that's going and what we can look forward to in the future from this minister and this government with regard to transportation planning.

There's going to be a 30-year strategic plan and a ten-year base plan. The mayors' council, however, doesn't get to approve these plans. Any changes or amendments need the mayors' council's approval.

The whole structure of this bailiwick is being put in force by the minister and the people that he's made sure are on this board of directors. Again, the actual locally elected people — none of these directors are elected by anybody — will be picking at the edges. They will be trying to pick up the pieces. It does not, as I said before, set the groundwork for collaboration between the minister and local governments and the people of the Metro Vancouver region.

The mayors' council, then, is a nominal body. It's an emasculated body. They really have no power. That's the way the minister intended it, of course, because

they're a parochial lot, anyway, and they can't be depended upon to make the right decisions.

H. Lali: According to the minister.

M. Sather: According to the minister.

He is the one with the wisdom, he is the one with power, and he is the one that's going to invoke that power.

The mayors' council only meets four times a year. How much input are they really going to have, meeting every three months? Not very much. Again, that's clearly the way this government intended it to be.

Their approval is not required for a fare increase. The government will say: "We're saving money here. We're saving money there." In the meantime, it's user fees, user fees, user fees, and this will be another one. We can look to more fare increases from this government. I have no doubt about that. The sad fact of the matter is that that's completely contradictory — working in the opposite direction of dealing with the climate change issue, of getting more people out of their cars, of getting them into rapid transit.

Increasing fares is a disincentive, obviously, for people to use rapid transit, but I don't think the government is worried about that. I think they look at it as a user-pay issue, so that's the pocket that a lot of the dollars are going to be coming out of for people to support the minister's project.

The mayors' council has to swear an oath that they will consider the interests of the transportation region as a whole. That is condescending and disrespectful.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

M. Sather: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it.

[1545]

H. Lali: I know that moments ago we had a vote on the hoist motion, which the government actually defeated. We all spoke on this side of the House, wondering if the people on the other side would speak. Some of us even tried to speak twice on that motion.

In any case, I rise to talk about what the government is trying to set up here. I'm really glad that the minister is across the way listening attentively, and I'm hoping that he will actually pick up on some of the ideas that have been put forward here and some of the things that perhaps he hasn't thought out or that his boss the Premier hasn't thought out as he's brought forward this bill.

Deputy Speaker: Member, can I just interrupt for a second. Just be sure that you don't mention whether a member is in or out of the House.

H. Lali: Absolutely, hon. Speaker. No attempt was made, or even thought of on my part, to mention anybody being here or not. I'm just referring to the fact that the minister is listening attentively to my speech and making a whole lot of notes across the way. At least, I'm hoping he's making a whole lot of notes. No

disparaging remarks or anything about the minister. He's a good fella. We get along quite fine and often work together on issues.

Having said that, just to continue on, I want to point out to the Liberal cabinet across the way that they haven't thought this out very clearly. Obviously, when the GTVA, the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority, was set up....

I was the Minister of Transportation at the time. Certainly, it was not the intent of what the minister and the Premier are trying to do here today and have been doing here for the last couple of weeks. It's totally against the intent of how it was set up.

The whole idea about local bodies.... As it was at the time, the GVRD in the lower mainland would be in control or in charge of looking after its own affairs as they were related to transportation within, roughly, the area of the lower mainland. It was very strongly suggested at the time....

We had months and months and over a year's worth of consultations and meetings between the provincial government of the day and also the elected officials in the lower mainland, whether they be in the regional district or within the municipalities that governed at the time. They wanted to make sure that the folks who would be represented on that particular board at the time would be folks who were accountable to the people they were going to serve through some form of an election, whether it was through the regional district or through the municipal bodies of the day. They were accountable every three years in terms of the decisions they were going to make.

It was a very strong point that they made. It was also something that the province was very in favour of, because at the end of the day, when you looked at the lower mainland — roughly 50 percent of the population of British Columbia and growing, obviously.... The budgets they were going to be looking at, in terms of the devolution of powers that went with it, the availability of the tax revenue that also went with it and the decisions they were able to make regarding planning, financing and taxation, etc. — all of that amounted in the billions over a number of years.

They would be spending billions of dollars. If you were looking at a five-year plan or a ten-year plan, for instance, for transportation, there were billions of dollars at stake, with 50 percent of the population of British Columbia to be actually caught within the framework of the GVTA and, obviously, TransLink, as the name they'd given it was.

Obviously, both sides of the House agree — and folks at the local level in the TransLink area would agree perhaps — that it wasn't working to the best of its abilities. But at the same time, they weren't looking for a wholesale turning of the entire page or even ripping it out and bringing in a whole new book. They were actually looking at ways to try to improve it. They wanted to do that in a way without having a massive disruption, and this is not what they envisaged. This is not what they told the Premier and the Liberal cabinet.

[1550]

I know this is not what they told the minister they wanted. They did not ask for an unelected body or a board of directors to be in charge of the transportation needs of 50 percent of the population of British Columbia. I mean, that's a huge task.

You know, when you have a huge task like that with large sums of moneys amounting to billions of dollars over a number of years, obviously you're basically dealing with the taxpayers' money — the taxpayers who live in the lower mainland — and whatever funds they're able to access from higher levels of government, the provincial and federal governments, in terms of helping out with their projects.

You're looking at billions of dollars, and yet here it is that the Premier has decided, along with my good friend the Transportation Minister, that they wanted to bring in an unelected body to be able to look after that with no accountability, hon. Speaker. There's no accountability. You know, when you're spending the taxpayers' money, you have to be accountable.

It's not like a private corporation, where they can impose their will. That's their money. They can do what they want with it and how they spend it. Of course, there are regulations they have to follow — municipal, provincial and federal — to make sure that things are being done in a manner that is not going to be harmful to society.

But in a public entity, rather, there has to be accountability. That's how our democracy works — the whole idea of representation by population and the idea of no taxation without representation. Those are the fundamental bases not just of our democracy but of democracies around the world. A fundamental basis for that is no taxation without representation.

Here we have this board of directors, which would have the ability to impose taxes on 50 percent of the populace of this province, and yet they would not have representation, effectively.

This council of mayors that is also set up. Obviously, the mayors are duly elected by the people they serve within this GVTA area, this TransLink area. They're elected, but they don't have any powers. They don't have any authority. They really don't have any say. They meet only once a quarter, and they would meet once a quarter to rubber-stamp whatever is put forward by this panel of supposed experts — this board of directors from within a number of organizations which are very, very friendly and cozy with the Liberal Premier of this province.

You have to ask yourself the question: whose will is it that they will put forward? Will it be the will of the people — who usually are represented, when there's taxation involved, by duly elected representatives, whether it's at the municipal, provincial or federal level?

In this case, it is a board of nine appointees. Effectively, it might as well be the Premier appointing them himself. It might as well be the Premier appointing those people himself, but he's got to set up his nine-member board of directors, and it will be done through a screening panel, which is set up to choose five candidates every year. Then the council of mayors will select three from among them.

Where does the screening panel actually look for these representatives? Well, here. They're not elected. It's not the people of British Columbia who are going to put forward those names. They're going to be put forward from these entities, one each from these groups: the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Greater Vancouver Gateway Council, the Ministry of Transportation and the council of mayors.

I have some faith in the council of mayors, but when it comes down to how this government has done things in this province in the almost seven years that they've been in office.... The people of British Columbia just don't trust the Liberal government of this province to be able to put forward the names of people in any kind of fair way.

[1555]

This whole thing is all about breaking down democracy as opposed to enhancing democracy. One of the goals of this government was that they were going to have the most open and honest government. Well, this doesn't lend to openness and honesty at all in terms of the goal that was put forward by the Premier.

While people at the local level.... They told us when we were in office in the '90s that they wanted more autonomy when the GVTA was set up. That's what it was all about — to give them autonomy, to give them the power, the authority and the control at the local level to make their own decisions when it comes to transportation.

Then the Premier says one of his goals is to make it even more democratic. But this is going backwards, not just one or two steps but a huge number of steps backwards, away from local autonomy, away from democracy and especially away from accountability. There's no accountability.

Those folks, the nine-member board, can do whatever they want without having to face the electorate every two, three, four or whatever number of years. They don't have to go back to the voters to see if the voters approved of their actions or of what they said or did and the decisions that they made on that board on behalf of 50 percent of the population of this province. There is no mechanism by which they actually go back to the voters to say if they've done a good job or not or even if those people, the voters in the lower mainland, approve of what they are doing.

One of my colleagues sitting right behind me, from Maple Ridge, just made a comment earlier when he was speaking. He made the comment that this was very, very autocratic in the way it's being set up. It's autocratic. It's being run out of the Premier's office, and it will be run as the Premier's pet project, as others have been. It is not anything to do with democracy or accountability in the way that it's going to be set up.

In terms of consultation, the public will suffer. They will suffer immensely because there is no mandate for this board of directors to actually go out and consult or to consult with anybody, because they're supposed to be this board of so-called experts from basically one sector.

There's no representation on that board from environmental groups. There's no representation on that board from folks in the labour movement as well. After all, all those projects that are going to be built are going to be built by workers working for those various construction companies or those consultation companies that construction companies will hire. The suppliers of the goods and services that will be used as a part of that are workers, but there's no mechanism by which they're going to be represented here. There just isn't.

When you look at municipalities within communities, community groups are able to voice their concerns, their opinions and their issues through their elected representatives, whether they're mayors or councillors at the city council level. They're able to do that. They have that voice. But here, there is no place that is being set up by this government, and as a matter of fact, it is to remove all of that.

There's nothing that says there are not going to be a bunch of Liberal political hacks appointed to these boards from all of these bodies. We know what these Liberal political hacks are capable — or should I say incapable — of doing. One only has to look at the convention centre, at what Liberal political hacks, these so-called experts, will do when they're put in charge. I know the minister responsible for the Olympics and the convention centre is listening attentively to this as well.

[1600]

When you look at it, you're going to find the same scenario taking place here in this instance as has taken place and is taking place with the convention centre and its massive cost overruns and the massive mismanagement that has taken place by the Premier's friends, the Liberal political hacks that this cabinet stacked onto that board responsible for the convention centre. We have seen it now year after year after year — the mismanagement.

That same mismanagement will take place with this nine-member board that the Premier is going to handpick and impose on the people of the lower mainland, in the similar way that the Premier and the Liberal cabinet imposed that board of the convention centre. We saw those massive cost overruns that have taken place — \$400 million and counting. Hon. Speaker, just think what would happen in this instance, where you're talking about billions of dollars that are going to be expended.

The real motive behind the way the Premier is setting all of this up is because he wants control. He wants to run it out of his office, the Premier's office, in terms of the planning, the financing, the taxes that would be levied, fare increases. That would be an area where the nine-member board would be free — to raise fares — because they are not accountable to the people who have to pay the fares. They can't be fired. They can't be fired by the people because they have moved those fare rates exorbitantly.

That's what will happen. It will become a user-pay system. That's what this Premier wants to do. That's the way it's being set up, and the real motive behind it is because the Premier didn't like democratically elected officials at the local level actually having a say

or wanting a say in terms of how the SkyTrain to the airport was going to be built. The Premier didn't like that, and perhaps even the Minister of Transportation didn't like that. Together they devised a way to get rid of that and get it out of the way. They didn't want opposition, and this was the way to do that.

The Premier's other pet projects — all of these massive transportation projects that he's got planned for the lower mainland — he doesn't want any opposition to. Whether it's the South Fraser perimeter road or the North Fraser perimeter road, the Port Mann Bridge twinning or the four-laning of the Trans-Canada Highway or even all of the other things, he doesn't want any opposition. The way to guarantee that is to remove the thorns in his side, which is to remove the democratically elected officials at the local level — namely, the mayors — to get them out of the way so he can steamroller on through with his projects.

That's the real motive, and that's the real motive in terms of how the Premier set this up. That's the real motive for how he set it up and how he is now going to impose his will on the people of British Columbia, especially in the lower mainland, by removing democratically elected officials out of the way and having his friends and his insiders from the big business community make all those decisions. Those are the people he's calling experts.

When the present TransLink is making decisions, they don't just look at the transportation issues. They look at everything. In terms of planning and financing, they look at what the growth strategies are going to be in the lower mainland. They look at how they're going to protect the environmental values, especially now that higher levels of government, provincial and federal, are beginning to mandate to the lower bodies — municipal and regional and other bodies — within the province.

They look at that. That's all a part of their decision-making, and they are free to go out and actually hire real experts from anywhere they choose — to hire those people, the very best experts in every field, whether it's locally in Vancouver, out of province or even out of the country. Whether it's growth planning or the management of the growth or how to protect the ALR or use the agricultural land reserve as a buffer to prevent urban sprawl so they can actually carry through the goals of the livable region strategic plan, which was actually put forward....

[1605]

It's a very, very visionary document from the 1990s which was created by the GVRD. In their own words, it was a plan to actually create "compact communities in a sea of green."

Who's going to look at that? All of these friends of the Premier who come from the big corporate business side of the field? They have only one thing in mind.

Interjection.

H. Lali: I hear the member behind me saying that he doesn't think so, and I agree with him.

The only motive is how best to actually just push through those megaprojects that the Premier has got

planned — namely, under the Gateway — and how to figure out a way to reward their friends without any due care to the agricultural land, to the environment, to the health of the people who live in these areas of urban sprawl — or how to curb it or how to fight climate change. All of these are goals of the livable strategic plan that was put in place by the GVRD. Senior governments are doing it all across the world right now.

What is there that would mandate this board of Liberal hacks from actually making sure that those goals are met? There's nothing there, because they are not accountable. They are not accountable to the people. They can do whatever they want without any kind of punishment at the polls, whereas councillors, mayors, MLAs and Members of Parliament are accountable because they know that when their term is up in either three, four or five years, they're going to have to face their voters with the decisions that they have made — that we have made, that each one of us here in this room has made.

We're accountable for our decisions when we go back to the electorate, to the voters, every four years, and every three years municipally and up to five years federally. We're accountable for our decisions. We get rewarded if we've made some good decisions. We'd be punished if we made bad decisions, and we know that.

But without any kind of impunity, this board of directors would go out there and make those decisions. That's how the Premier set it up — so that these people would not have a fear of the voters in making the decisions that the Premier wants to impose on the people of the lower mainland. That's why he set it up to be undemocratic and unaccountable.

That's how the Premier has done it, and he didn't do it in just this. That's his *modus operandi*. He does that in every other area, and he wants to carry this out here in this area as well.

Look at the way the health authorities are set up. He set them up at arm's length, and then he appointed people to be in charge of those health authorities who are not health care professionals. They are accountants and bean-counters, and their bottom line is to just make sure that they don't go over that bottom line of money that they are given. When they get close to running out, what do they do? They start making massive cuts to health care services in this province.

We see that all over the province, and that's how the Premier wants to set this body up as well, so he can control it.

Timber Sales is another one. B.C. Timber Sales — do they look after the interests of the people of British Columbia or the communities throughout the province, in rural British Columbia especially? Do they look after the value-added remanufacturers? Do they look after the smallwood program? Or do they look after the interests of the family-run operations — the families that live in British Columbia who have spent generations building up their sawmills or whatever operations they have in the forest industry?

Does B.C. Timber Sales have any interest in looking after those people? No, because the B.C. Timber Sales is

dominated by big business, the big corporations, and everything is being consolidated. That's another model that the Premier set up that he wants to impose with TransLink now in the way he wants to set it up.

[1610]

It's the same thing that the Premier has done with the B.C. Ferry Corporation. Take it out of the hands of government and set it up as a so-called independent entity. And what have we seen? Are they responsive to the needs and the will of the people of British Columbia and the taxpayers, the users who use the B.C. ferries? No. Why? Because those ferry rates have been going up steadily since this Liberal government took office. Because they've allowed.... They can comfortably turn around and say: "Well, don't blame us. It's set up at arm's length from the government. Go talk to them. They're the ones who are making the decision."

This is how they want to set all of these entities up — to hire high-paid guns to be in charge of those arm's-length entities that the Premier has been setting up all throughout this province so that he doesn't have to take the flak from the people of British Columbia. Who are the people that will take the flak? They're the ones he has put in charge, his friends who are paid handsomely by this Premier to take the flak — not to manage, not to look after the interests of the people of British Columbia. The Premier has hired those people to take the flak that he should be taking, that he should be accountable for.

That's what will happen, because the Premier is going to load up that board of directors with his friends, with Liberal insiders from one sector of not only this economy but the province of British Columbia. That's how he has set it up, and that's how he is doing it in every one of these — putting it all at arm's length so that the Premier himself doesn't have to take the flak. His high-priced, high-powered, high-paid help will take the flak on his behalf, and it's a real shame.

This secretive agenda that the Premier has put forward that he won't actually face the public with and tell them what the real motives are.... That's the way he's used to doing things. The people out there always ask us: "Well, what is it about the Liberal caucus and the Liberal cabinet? Why won't they speak up? Why will they not speak up on behalf of the people of British Columbia?"

I ask all of those lower mainland Liberal MLAs and ministers why it is that they won't actually speak up on behalf of the people they represent who want democracy for TransLink. They want accountability, because they are the ones who are paying the fare. Why won't they speak up? Why won't the Minister of Transportation, who himself lives in the lower mainland, stand up for the people that he represents instead of allowing the Premier to run roughshod and force this entity down the throats of the people of the lower mainland who don't want it?

They want accountability. They want democracy. They don't want something that is a sham that has been put there to be run out of the Premier's office. That's not what they bargained for. That's not what they asked for. The people of British Columbia want to be in charge of, not all, but some of the things that affect

them in their lives. But we know this is not what it's all about.

The secret that the Liberals will not tell us is how they want to run this in an autocratic fashion because they don't like opposition. They couldn't stand it when it came to the SkyTrain to the airport. They couldn't stand it. They couldn't stand to have locally elected officials in the lower mainland speaking up on behalf of their constituents and holding the government's feet to the fire. They couldn't handle the heat, so they're putting it at arm's length, and the Premier's going to put his friends in charge.

The Premier is going to put his friends in charge of running this multi-billion-dollar.... You might as well call it a corporation, because that's the way he's setting it up — just the way his corporate buddies on Howe Street like it. All of those people that pump in tens of thousands of dollars — indeed, hundreds of thousands of dollars — into Liberal campaigns.... All of those big businesses are the ones who are calling the shot. The Premier's just become a figurehead for them. That's all he is. They sit there, pull his strings, call the shots. He goes out and does it. The big beneficiaries of all of that, as it's been for the last seven years, have been big business, whether it's tax giveaways or the P3s.

[1615]

When the government does its projects, it is able to borrow the long-term financing at a lower rate than those private entities. Guess who's paying for that, including the interest? It's you and me and the people of British Columbia. We're all paying for it, and it's a shame. It is a shame.

Before I sit down, I want to say that I am standing up here on behalf of the people of British Columbia and the people of the lower mainland to speak against what the Premier and the minister are doing.

R. Chouhan: I'm rising to oppose this bill. I'm deeply concerned by the level of arrogance displayed by the B.C. Liberal government by introducing Bill 43. The B.C. Liberals, by introducing this bill, have shown total disrespect for the democratic principles in this province.

The funniest thing about Bill 43 is its title. It is called Bill 43, Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Amendment Act, 2007. As my colleague from Nanaimo pointed out the other day, an amendment generally contemplates that you are going to preserve that which exists and modify or improve it. But if you look at Bill 43 and carefully compare it with what we currently have, it's a wholesale change — a total departure from what currently exists.

The changes made by this bill effectively remove democratic control from the hands of local politicians and put it into the hands of unelected "experts," with vestigial democratic oversight in the form of the mayors' council. The real power in the new TransLink will rest with the board of directors, which is selected by government and business interests such as the Minister of Transportation, the chartered accountants, the Vancouver Board of Trade and the Gateway Council.

The board of directors runs TransLink and does all the planning, and the mayors' council will only vote on options proposed by the directors. What is more, the directors will write the initial policy of the transportation authority without requiring ratification by the mayors.

Furthermore, the first board of directors is being chosen through an ad hoc method set up by the Minister of Transportation. Bill 43 will ratify the results, whatever they are.

The long-term, 30-year strategic plan and the first ten-year base plan will become the status quo of transportation planning. They will define levels of service, capital projects, revenue sources such as fares, taxes and tolls, and expenditures.

The board of directors is required to engage in public consultation and is required to consider regional land use objectives, provincial and regional environmental objectives, anticipated population growth and economic development. But they are not required to actually abide by any of these consultations or considerations, and no democratically elected body, not even the mayors' council, needs to approve the first strategic plan or base plan. This means that the board of directors can set the initial policy of the authority completely on their own.

The mayors' council's approval is required for supplements, changes to the base plan and service, capital projects, expenditures, revenues, etc. The board of directors alone sets the status quo, and the mayors' council is only necessary to deviate from this.

What we have is a nine-member board of directors. An unelected group of people will be running TransLink, unlike the democratically elected board of directors that we have now.

[1620]

We should not be surprised with what the Liberal government is trying to do. This is not the first time the B.C. Liberal government has behaved like this. Arrogance has become the trademark of this government. The Premier, with his dictatorial style of government, has shown a complete disregard for democracy.

He and the Minister of Transportation do not want the duly elected representatives of the public to have any control. They want their handpicked cronies, who would be just the yes-men, and therefore, no accountability.

Nobody who uses transit is on the board. Nobody even asked for.... Nobody who may have some background in the environmental field is on the board. Nobody from the labour movement, the trade unions is asked to be on the board. No one who may be duly elected will be on the board.

In 1998 the then Liberal opposition leader supported the creation of TransLink and called for more legislation to protect the autonomy and independence of TransLink from provincial interference. But now the Premier and the B.C. Liberals do not want any part of that. They are doing nothing but legislating provincial interference.

Since the B.C. Liberals got elected in 2001, the Liberals did not like the independence and autonomous nature of the TransLink board, because TransLink voted against the construction of the Richmond-

Airport-Vancouver transit line, and the TransLink board did not like the P3 idea of the Minister of Transportation to build it.

Then, to punish TransLink for opposing the RAV line, the Minister of Transportation announced a new \$600 million plan — which is now a more than \$1.5 billion plan — to twin the Port Mann Bridge. Again, when the TransLink board decided to vote against the RAV line a second time, the Minister of Transportation said: "I would be dishonest if I did not tell you that my confidence in TransLink's ability to make regional transit decisions has been severely shaken." It was reported in the *Richmond News* on June 23, 2004, that he could support a governance model with unelected officials.

So, Madam Speaker, the views of the Minister of Transportation and the B.C. Liberal government are well known to the public — about their desire to have hand-picked yes-men to replace the duly elected board of directors. Since 2004 the Minister of Transportation and the Premier have stated publicly over and over again their contempt against the current TransLink board.

Bill 43 has nothing to do with efficiency. It is all about control. This bill effectively removes the public's ability to participate through elected representatives. We all know the Minister of Transportation's admiration of the Chinese way of doing things. He does not want to have any labour and environmental restrictions.

In September 2006, when the GVRD board voted against twinning the Port Mann Bridge on the basis of its inconsistency with the livable strategic plan, the Minister of Transportation dismissed the vote as inconsequential. Now we have Bill 43, the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Amendment Act.

It could be anything but not an amendment, Madam Speaker. It's wholesale legislative interference. Municipalities, academics, the labour unions and the community groups are all left out. It's important that we do everything to oppose this Bill 43.

[1625]

Let me now talk about what the impact of this twinning of the Port Mann Bridge could be on Burnaby. Under that plan, the new bridge will be tolled. If a toll is put on that bridge, the impact of that would be that many people will be using the Pattullo Bridge, which is already messed up. A number of people have lost their lives on that bridge. It will make it more congested.

There will be more traffic on the sidestreets and the streets going through Burnaby and New Westminster. McBride street, 10th Avenue, Sixth Street, Canada Way: they will all be jammed up. The impact of that on the residents living in that area is unexplainable.

I have asked the officials several times at those public meetings to advise me, let me know what kind of study was done to show that there would be no environmental impact on the residents and the Deer Lake area. No answer was ever given to me.

Now we have the Sea to Sky Highway being built. Nobody's talking about putting a toll on that, so the rich people can go and have two weeks of fun in Whistler. But the working people who would have to cross the bridge to come to work would be asked to pay.

Why, Madam Speaker? That's unfair. We must do everything to stop it.

In closing, I want to say this. It's not too late for the minister and the Premier to reconsider their position. They should think about the impact of this, think about all the statements they were making when they were in opposition. Now they're going back and doing totally the opposite of what they were asking for before they were in government.

For those reasons I ask everyone to oppose this bill.

A. Dix: It's wonderful to have the opportunity to rise and debate today and to speak to Bill 43, which purports to deal with important issues of transportation and transit in the lower mainland of British Columbia — indeed, somewhat beyond what we traditionally called the lower mainland before.

It's wonderful to rise on this issue because transit is such a fundamental issue in my community of Vancouver-Kingsway. Hon. Speaker, as you may know — because you, like me, come from a community where transit is heavily used by the public — this is particularly true in my community of Vancouver-Kingsway. I have, you'll be interested to know, no less than seven SkyTrain stations in my constituency and a number of key transit hubs in my constituency.

People in my constituency, in fact, depend in particular on public transit. It seems to me that if one were trying to assess a governance structure, especially a governance structure that deals with issues of public transit, that the views, the needs, the demands and the thoughts of people who use public transit would be paramount in the minds of policy-makers. In fact, those very ideas that are so important, the day-to-day reality of dealing with issues in public transit....

[1630]

I'm going to get to those in a few minutes because I know that hon. members will be extremely interested to understand the context and the types of decisions that have to be made. I think, therefore, that the debate around these issues should focus first on those people — on citizens and on their representatives.

It's surprising to me that the bill that is before the House, Bill 43, represents another vision. It represents a vision that mistrusts the very people who use public transit, a vision that mistrusts their elected representatives, a vision that mistrusts the democratic process and a vision designed to overwhelm those interests.

It seems simply wrong that the views of the people who use public transit should be so shut out in a bill that is designed to deal with public transit. I'd like to speak to some of the details of this bill. One wonders how such a bill could get before us. How is it that a piece of legislation like this could get before us?

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

I'm sad to say this, because as I said, I think that the process and TransLink and decisions around TransLink are key decisions that should be made by local representatives of the people, involving citizens in

their communities. Those should be the key decisions around public transit. It's shocking to me. It's surprising to me that a bill comes before this House which takes, in fact, the opposite view.

Worse than that, it takes a sort of patrician view. It's hard to imagine, when you think about it, when you think about the people who were involved in designing it, but it takes a patrician view. It takes the view that the people shall not be trusted and, "We're going to make sure that they don't play the role that they should play" — the role that they deserve.

What do we have? We have a bill — and this seems impossible to believe; I needed to read the bill twice to fully gather in what the minister had in mind — that actually removes democratic control from elected people and puts it in the hands of unelected experts, a bill of governance that wrests control....

D. Jarvis: I'm shocked.

A. Dix: The member from North Vancouver, like me, is shocked that such a bill would be brought before the House.

It is shocking, in fact, to think that here in this Legislature — a legislature, by the way.... This bill wasn't proposed out of the ether. It wasn't proposed by a council of experts. It was proposed by an elected politician from Surrey who became the Minister of Transportation, who has somehow elevated himself to a new level of expertise since he came to that role. Perhaps....

Interjection.

A. Dix: I don't know. I'm getting suggestions. "Commissar" was the term that was used.

He seems to have lifted himself up to become the political expression of the idea of taxation without representation. It seems surprising that the Minister of Transportation would see himself in that role.

You know, there was a Premier in British Columbia once.... It's amazing how the political right and the political extreme right in this province have changed. The member for Nelson-Creston will remember this, and, hon. Speaker, you'll remember this. There was, in fact, a Premier who was then Leader of the Opposition. He rose just in front of me here, and what did he say? "Not a dime without debate."

Now we have a Minister of Transportation who says: "Not a debate without money." It's a bizarre world over there, where the people who are elected to be representatives of democracy — we all got elected to be here to make these decisions — decide to wrest that democracy away from another level of government. We've got a bizarre world. Everything that's up is down; everything that's left is right.

I think it is surprising. It's disappointing that a government of elected officials would bring forward this legislation. It is surprising. How did we get here? How did this moment happen? This is the question we want to ask, because it came a long way along.

I think it came along because, like a lot of people, the Minister of Transportation became irritated. He became irritated about the actions of elected officials.

Let's think of who those officials are. Are they — could it be? — representatives of the NDP? That might be surprising. Were they members of the NDP? No. They were, in fact, local elected officials in the lower mainland. He became irritated because he wanted to have his way. This TransLink model was set in place. There was a role for local government, and from time to time the local government officials didn't agree with the Minister of Transportation.

It's an appalling notion. It's a surprising notion.

An Hon. Member: Freethinkers. They were freethinkers.

A. Dix: They were freethinking. They felt that when they went to the people....

C. Evans: He thought it was his electric train. He went down to the basement and built his train.

A. Dix: That's right. The member for Nelson-Creston is correct. They intervened in this vision of transportation that seems to involve a train in the basement. Our transportation system is seen by this government as its train in the basement.

Unfortunately, the law didn't support that. The law didn't support that vision, that view or that position. The law said that locally elected officials had power and could make decisions about these issues.

What did the Minister of Transportation do? Well, he huffed. He puffed. He blew and blew. From time to time the house shook, but local officials decided not to give up all their power and not to say: "Oh my gosh. The Minister of Transportation has spoken. Yes, sir. Let's act immediately. Let's forget about who we represent. Yes, sir. We must go right ahead."

That didn't happen. They actually disagreed with the Minister of Transportation on a huge public transportation project in the lower mainland. They disagreed. They negotiated. They represented their constituents. You know what the Minister of Transportation said about that? It's extraordinary. He actually said that he found the process of locally elected officials doing what they were allowed to do under the law — in fact, if you think about the democratic process, what they were obligated to do as representatives of the people....

He found that process.... Well, let's see what he found that process. On December 3, 2004, he said that it was parochial. Oh gosh. Parochial. The Minister of Transportation thought something was parochial.

J. Horgan: Is that a huff or a puff?

A. Dix: I think that was a huff.

He also found it disturbing. He found it disturbing. He found it circuitous. Let me review the depth of his thinking on this question — parochial, disturbing, circuitous.

What did he say? "I think I might take over the TransLink board."

C. Evans: "It's my electric train. It's my basement."

A. Dix: "It's my electric train, and I'll cry if I want to."

What did he do next? Well, he moved on. He said that in fact, the process of local elected representation on the TransLink board was a "fiasco." Well, hon. Speaker, you know and I know that many people expressing their frustration at times with the political process, with the democratic process — where their will, their wants and their desires are not picked up in that process — feel that the process is a fiasco.

I think most people in British Columbia would agree with this. Most people in British Columbia would say that that's a necessary thing, that it is the job of elected officials, whether they be members of this Legislature, Members of Parliament in Ottawa or local elected officials. Their role is critical. Their role of representation is critical. The reaction of people....

[1640]

I find it surprising that this bill would come from a Leader of the Government. Did I say Leader of the Government? It might be a bit premature. He may get there one day. One of the leaders on the government side.

That a bill like this would come forward from someone who, in fact, gets all of their power from being a member of this Legislature.... It's someone who says: "I find democracy inconvenient, and I want to strip it away from other people." It's a surprising approach from such a politician. But on we went.

He called democracy.... He thinks it's a circus kind of atmosphere. He says that those who disagree with him are not even remotely connected to the merits of the project — people opposing it for issues that are entirely parochial and backyard politics in nature.

Well, indeed. So people who disagree with the Minister of Transportation.... Depending on how you count, that could be a lot of people in British Columbia. In fact — dare I say it? — it could be a lot of people on the government side. Dare I say it? But I won't want to get into that.

What are the views of other people? This is — the member for Nelson-Creston will know this, because we try sometimes not to be ideological — not really an ideological question. Let me quote from Marvin Hunt, who is a councillor in the city of Surrey.

I ask because my colleague is here from Surrey-Whalley. He's an outstanding MLA. He gave a superb speech, which I recommend to everyone in this House. I ask him because I think I am correct in this, and he can nod. Mr. Hunt is not a member yet of the New Democratic Party. Is that correct?

Here is what Mr. Hunt said. It's very thoughtful. I recommend it to the member for Vancouver-Burrard, because I know that he's....

L. Mayencourt: I love thinking.

A. Dix: He loves thinking.

Here is what he says: "The results of the GVRD board's extensive review of GVTA governance...." Local elected officials did an extensive review. What did they discover?

"They have affirmed that the legislation is robust and that only minor modifications are appropriate to broaden municipal representation, clarify features of the act and improve communications. No radical changes are required. There has been remarkable progress on development of Greater Vancouver's transportation system in the few short years since the establishment of the GVTA."

That's what Mr. Hunt said. As I say, Mr. Hunt is not a socialist, not a member of the NDP. In fact, I think he probably — I'm guessing this; I don't know — supports other political parties. Yet his view is that democracy and the democratic process should prevail and that members and people who should make these key decisions should be the representatives of the people. He believes, like we believe, in no taxation without representation. That's what he believes.

That's not the view put forward in this legislation. No. What's the view put forward in this legislation? What this legislation does.... You know, it's surprising. I'm looking forward to the many speeches that are going to come from members on the government side explaining their position on this legislation, because it seems perplexing to me.

What the bill does is wrest control from local elected officials. It takes the control. The Minister of Transportation got angry. He got irritated. He got frustrated. Gosh, it must happen at every cabinet meeting, yet there, control cannot be wrested. But in this case it can be wrested.

What happens? He takes control, and he puts it in the hands of unelected experts. They'll be selected. The real power in the new TransLink board — where does it lie? It seems to lie with the board of directors. That's what the legislation says.

They'll run TransLink. They'll do all the planning. They get to write, without any consultation from mayors, the original planning document — the original direction, the original policy document. They'll do that completely on their own.

Who gets to decide who will be on that list? Who gets to decide who gets chosen? Who gets to decide the list from which they will be chosen?

[1645]

J. Horgan: Are there experts?

A. Dix: Are there experts?

Well, this is an interesting list. Who gets to decide?

This is what the legislation says. It's surprising to me — and it's really contrary, it seems to me, to the spirit of the legislation — because on the list of selectors here is the Minister of Transportation himself. In other words, the Minister of Transportation has placed himself on the list. So he still gets to decide. He gets there. He's on this panel of experts.

Who else is there? Well, the chartered accountants are there.

J. Horgan: I like the accountants.

A. Dix: I like the accountants. I wish the chartered accountants would run for office. Then they could be represented on locally elected councils, and they'd join a real TransLink that represents local communities. That's what I think. But here, the Institute of Chartered Accountants gets a spot. The Vancouver Board of Trade gets a spot.

H. Bains: The Surrey Board of Trade is neglected again.

A. Dix: Aside from the question, my good friend from Surrey-Newton has raised this important point. I know my colleague from Peace River South will understand this point. He'll understand the disrespect that's sometimes shown outside of the city of Vancouver by centralizing interests like the Minister of Transportation — the disrespect he must sometimes show.

It feels like a caucus meeting, doesn't it? It feels like a caucus meeting over there. They're used to this. They know what it's about. I am speaking their language over there. That's why I'm speaking to the back bench of the Liberal Party. I believe the back bench of the Liberal Party can do something important here. The back bench of the Liberal Party can do something important here.

Oh, you know, hon. Members, that it's a state of mind over there. The back bench of the Liberal caucus understands what I'm saying. Why is it that it's the Vancouver Board of Trade? What qualifies this group for their expertise on transit?

I have held community meeting after community meeting on public transit. They've never come. I've never seen a representative of the Vancouver Board of Trade at a community transit meeting. Maybe they'll come now, but they haven't come.

You could go from the board of trade downtown to my constituency in 15 minutes by SkyTrain, but they don't come. Yet they get a place on this board. They get to make decisions about what people who take transit.... They're paying more and more money for transit since this government came to office — a 50-percent increase in transit fares since they took office.

What's the board of trade's position on that? Are they in favour of protecting the interests of those who ride the bus? Is that the position that they're going to take? Is that why they're on the council here? Is that why they are the power brokers? Is that why they are the retainers, to use an old-fashioned expression?

An Hon. Member: How come not the Surrey Board of Trade?

A. Dix: Why not the Surrey Board of Trade? It's an excellent point. Why is it that it is a board of trade at all? Why has this private organization been given power? Everyone will remember that in fact, that organization gave significant support to the Minister of Transportation in his attack on local democracy, in his decision. People will remember that. They were there for him, and now they'll be here for him every day.

The law says that this private organization — an important organization, an organization I respect, but it's one private organization — in the city of Vancouver gets an institutional place. This is not a free enterprise government; this is a corporatist government. This isn't free enterprise. This isn't opportunity. This is giving established interests institutional and legal power over people, and it shouldn't happen.

The Minister of Transportation. Remember whose power he's taking. The power he's taking is the power of locally elected officials. He's taking power from them, and he's handing it to organizations.

[1650]

Of course, the Vancouver Board of Trade should have views on transit and transportation. Of course they have, and they should bring forward those views in an open and democratic process. They shouldn't have an institutional place. They shouldn't have a guaranteed seat deciding at the table. They shouldn't be bumping locally elected officials from that table.

They shouldn't be making all of the decisions that will affect my constituents who take transit, who don't have enough service, who have seen a 50-percent increase, who suffer because SkyTrain can sometimes be dangerous for them. These are the issues they've raised.

Let me compare the approach, because I think this is an important question of approach here. As you know....

Interjections.

A. Dix: Well, hon. Speaker, in the tradition of that, members of the Legislature are making suggestions for other things the board of trade can do. But this is a democracy, and I think members of this House would agree with me that the decision to hand over this authority to private organizations, to create private power over the public interests....

There was a great film made in the 1970s that, in my view of the film, turned some of the debate about U.S. foreign policy on its head. That film was called *Chinatown*. You'll recall what happened in that film. It shows a little bit, I think, of what happens in American control over public utilities.

What happens in the film? What's the notion of the film? There is a character named Noah Cross. He could be Minister of Transportation today. Noah Cross was played by John Huston in the film. You remember that. His son-in-law ran the public water agency. He owned it privately. He moved it into public hands, but he retained control over it, control over the water.

It was the worst of all possible worlds, and you remember what happened. It turned things on its head. His son-in-law, who ran the new public utility, thought that the world began in tide pools and sloughs. That's what the film was about. It turned things on its head. I look at that film, and I say that we should have public control of public utilities. The Minister of Transportation probably looks at that film and says: "That's something we should try."

C. Evans: It worked in L.A.

A. Dix: It worked in L.A. He thinks that's something we should try. He sees the model of public control over public utilities in the film *Chinatown*, and his reaction isn't that of Jake Gittes. His reaction is on the side of Noah Cross.

I think this couldn't be so. I think that members of this House should have more opportunity and more time, because I believe that this bill fundamentally does the following things, and I've expressed this so far in this speech.

I believe that this bill undermines local democracy. I believe that, and I think that case has been put forward persuasively by members of this House. I believe — and we'll have more to say about this — that it will result in dramatic increases in local property taxes and transit fares. I believe that, and I think the member from Esquimalt, the member for Vancouver-Kensington and the member for Surrey-Whalley have demonstrated that pretty clearly in their outstanding speeches on this bill.

It would be nice to comment on some other members' speeches, but those are still to come. We await them with bated breath. We look forward to those speeches. We look forward to hearing the member for Vancouver-Burrard defend Noah Cross. We look forward to that.

I believe that this bill will not provide the resources necessary to create the public transportation improvements which are so necessary in the lower mainland. I believe that fundamentally, this bill goes contrary to what the Premier said he would do.

Do you remember the Premier? The mayor's opposition leader? Remember him? Remember that Premier who went around and built support amongst mayors? Here's a bill that in fact will intrude into municipal autonomy.

[1655]

Hon. Speaker, having gathered those views, I would like to move the following motion.

[That Bill (No. 43) not be read a second time now for the following reasons:

It undermines local democracy;

Will result in dramatic increases in local property taxes and dramatic increases in transit fares;

Will not provide the resources necessary to create the public transit improvements which are so necessary in the lower mainland; and

Is an intrusion into municipal autonomy.]

On the amendment.

A. Dix: Hon. Speaker, it's my great pleasure now to speak to that motion, because that motion, I think, summarizes the comprehensive views put forward by members of this Legislature who have reviewed this legislation, who have spent time on this legislation and who have said very clearly that this legislation should not be read a second time now.

I speak for the member for New Westminster, whose constituents every day use transit and who have been excluded from this process. Power has been taken away from their local elected officials in this process

and put in the hands of people who couldn't possibly understand the transit needs of the people of New Westminster. They wouldn't understand the fact that many people live on the brow of the hill in New Westminster, under very difficult conditions sometimes and what it means when there isn't a bus available to them to go up that hill late at late at night in terms of their personal safety. That's why the member for New Westminster has eloquently spoken against this bill.

The member for Surrey-Whalley, whose constituents deserve better service than they're getting now, whose constituents care about public transit, whose constituents have to wait every week to get on public transit because it isn't open early enough on the weekends. The member has been an eloquent spokesperson for their views.

He doesn't believe and I don't believe that people will be properly represented in this process, that the people who have been put on the minister's supra-council, his master quango.... He doesn't believe that those people will be represented in that process. He doesn't believe it, and that's why the member for Surrey-Whalley is against this legislation.

The member for Nelson-Creston comes from a community where local questions and local control are important. You go to Nelson, and you understand the meaning of local control, of a community that has taken control of its future over decades, that has fought very difficult conditions and has remade itself and remade itself again. It's a community that believes in local control over decision-making.

I think the member for Nelson-Creston is offended by this anti-democratic legislation. He's offended by it. He's spoken eloquently on this question. I believe he should get another chance to speak eloquently on this legislation. That's why this motion....

Interjections.

Deputy Speaker: Member, would you take your seat just for a moment, please.

I just want to remind members that it is not permitted to either speak or whatever from any seat other than your own.

Resume, Member.

A. Dix: I think that the member for Nelson-Creston has put it very well many times. I don't think the member for Nelson-Creston — and I find it hard to believe that members on the opposite side could do this — would vote for legislation that, as this motion says, undermines local democracy.

Look, let there be no doubt that that's what this legislation does. Let there be no doubt about that. That isn't hidden in the legislation. That is not our interpretation of the legislation. That's the reason for the legislation. We have a minister of the Crown who, in fact, believes, surprisingly, that power over local transportation decisions should be stripped away from local elected officials.

Because I've heard the member for Nelson-Creston speak on issues of democracy, I get the impression that he would find that appalling, and I think he does. But

even more important than that, I dare say to the member for Nelson-Creston that people of Nelson, Creston and Winlaw would find that offensive. They do find it offensive, and that's why we, the people on the opposition side, are opposing the amendment, this legislation.

[1700]

This motion, hon. Speaker, states very clearly that the very local democracy that is so important in the development of public transit be maintained, that the legislation not be passed.

Why is it important? I'll tell you, hon. Speaker, in my community of Vancouver-Kingsway why that local democracy is important. In my community of Vancouver-Kingsway this year we've had a series of terrible incidents involving women using public transit. Every one of those women, who were all assaulted, was going to work or coming home from work or going to school or coming home from school.

People in our community got together. As those things happen, people got together in our community, and we had public meetings. Several dozen people — a councillor in Vancouver, Raymond Louie — some of my colleagues and I went around and knocked on every door in the vicinity of the 29th Avenue SkyTrain station. We talked to people about their concerns, their fears, what they were facing — the reality of what they're facing every day — and that sense, and it's a real sense, that you can't travel safely on SkyTrain, especially after a certain hour of night or outside of times.

Now think of the 29th Avenue SkyTrain station. To comment on this, you'd have to know that area and care about that area. That SkyTrain station is unique because the area around it is entirely residential. There are actually no stores. You have to walk from 29th Avenue, get out of the station, walk down 29th to Slocan and then walk about four blocks before you find one store, which is unusual in the city of Vancouver.

What that means is that even though that station is less used than most of the transit stations in Vancouver, it's used by people going to and from work — hard-working people who are going to and from work. But it's often isolated.

What we said, after we had public meetings, after we had petitions signed, after we talked to everyone in the community.... This is how I think transit decisions should be made — not by elitists in an ivory tower, as presumed by this legislation, but by engaging with people and the community. What did they say to us, and why are their views and their vision of what public transit should be not being reflected in the legislation about public transit?

They said to us that there should be somebody, a live person, at a SkyTrain station when SkyTrain is in service. It's a modest proposal, one would think. You'd have to actually take SkyTrain to know what that's about, because SkyTrain will say.... What they did was respond by putting up a little sign — I'll tell you the little sign was not that much bigger than an 8½-by-11-inch piece of paper — warning people to be careful. That's what their initial response was.

People said that wasn't good enough. You have to imagine getting off the train late at night, and there's

no one around. People say there are phones and other things that can help, but it's not good enough. If you live near the station and you take SkyTrain, you know it's not good enough.

It's not good enough for me. My wife doesn't use a car. She takes SkyTrain every day. It's not good enough for me that she doesn't feel safe after seven o'clock at night. Her local elected officials should have the power to do something about that. She shouldn't have to go petition the board of trade to do something about that. The citizens around 29th Avenue should not have to have their influence over those decisions stripped away.

The influence of local government.... People may say that there isn't a great connection between the people and government, but there is a connection. Everybody in this House knows there's a connection. We feel that connection every day. When we do something that's a mistake or we say something that's a mistake, we hear from our constituents. They have the power to turf us out, as they should have the power to turf us out. That is called "parochial" by members of the Crown.

"Forget it," says the Minister of Transportation. "Forget about that stuff. Let's take that power away. Let's turn our public transportation system into the governance structure that they have at the airport." That's what the Minister of Transportation says.

[1705]

You know the power that people feel when they have that airport improvement fee imposed on their ticket price, the control they feel. How much control is that? They don't have any control. This notion that the democratic process is an inconvenience is a notion that we who depend on the voters to elect us here should reject every single time.

C. Evans: Just because you call it the Crown doesn't mean you have divine right.

A. Dix: That's right. There's no divine right. We got rid of divine right — at least we thought we did until 2001. So we had that process around 29th Avenue, around Nanaimo station, which is another relatively isolated SkyTrain station. The challenge people feel is palpable.

So what did we do? We put forward a petition that listed off six or seven ideas that came from the community — that came from canvassing the community, from talking to people in the community — and we put them forward. Thousands of people in the community signed that petition, and things started to change. For one thing, whenever I would go and sign petitions, oddly, people would start showing up at the stations. That was a good thing. And we started showing up at the stations. People in the community wanted other ideas around the station. Some of the ideas aren't just about law enforcement.

The member for Nelson-Creston will be interested in this because he's our caucus's outstanding spokesperson for agriculture. I'm involved in a community garden that we started at the Joyce Street SkyTrain station. It was hard work because the ground had been pounded down at that station, and I dug some of that. I

have to say that I am probably the world's worst digger. I did the work of a quarter of a person that day. But people in the community thought that was important. They petitioned TransLink, they worked with local elected officials, and they started a community garden at Joyce SkyTrain.

It makes a huge difference, because people are there at the station where people walk under the SkyTrain station towards their homes in the apartments on Crowley Drive, on Gaston and on Melbourne in my community. They were able to have influence on that process. They got a couple of pieces of land, and there are dozens of people working on that land today. They are, amongst other things, growing fruits and vegetables for our local breakfast program. It's an extraordinary community initiative.

It's what public transit is about when it's connected to local communities. It's why, even though it's a small thing, it makes our community better and safer. It's why we connect decisions in public policy to local communities, and it's why this piece of legislation is so wrong.

What else did they say? They said that whenever anyone was at a SkyTrain station, somebody should be there. That's local people petitioning their local representatives, and that idea is starting to get some action. In fact, more people are being hired. TransLink, in association with the community policing office, launched a pink-whistle campaign — a safety campaign. We had safety meetings. I think people in the community are understanding more about what they need to do to be safer. I think they're looking out for each other more. All of these things happen.

That's the program we came up with. We came up with a multi-point program. Thousands of people supported it in petitions. That's what happens when you have local control. That's encouraged.

But the Minister of Transportation — our Noah Cross — finds that inconvenient. Well, it's not inconvenient. It's absolutely necessary.

I don't understand this. I don't understand why you would list a group of people to choose who the board of directors is, give them control over that process and not include at least somebody who rides the bus, somebody who drives a bus.

You know, we've heard from some members of this House on the government side, and I won't mention who, give long and eloquent speeches here, passionate speeches — angry speeches, I dare say — saying that those people don't have any expertise and why would we give them any power? Why would we give them any control? What a shocking idea.

[1710]

Hon. Speaker, I can tell you that people who drive buses, people who work on SkyTrain, SkyTrain police, SkyTrain riders and transit users know more about transit than, I say to you, the board of directors of the Vancouver Board of Trade. That doesn't mean one group should be excluded from having influence on the process. That means everybody should be included, that everyone matters. That's what it says.

The government is passing legislation. It's shocking to think that a democratically elected government would do this. I think that that period between '01 and '05, that 77-to-2 period that became 76-to-3.... It's going back and forward. I'll make my prediction now. How many seats has the Premier got in the House — 87 for the next one? I think it's heading rapidly to 30-57. That's my prediction.

But that period taught the government all the wrong lessons. Those lessons, I say with the greatest of respect to the Minister of Transportation, are exemplified in a bill that simply takes away from people their control over decisions that affect their lives in a fundamental way and favours some groups over other groups. That's not the democratic process.

People are not equal in our society. People have said this. There are great differences and growing inequality in terms of financial power, certainly in terms of the difference in our communities — the member for Vancouver-Fairview's and my constituency.

The difference between those who own and those that rent is growing. Other differences are growing in society, and one has to ask themselves why there is a need to create more institutional inequality. There is no need. These institutions, the institutions of government, are the institutions that should, in fact, bring us together, that should, in fact, give equal voice to different interests in society and not dramatically favour some over others.

It's especially true on legislation that favours the already powerful and says their interests should count more than the interests of other people. This is wrong, and what it's going to lead to is some of the things we've seen from this government: increased fees on individuals, increased costs on individuals, cuts in income assistance, cuts in benefits.

These are the processes that increase inequality in society, and now we have a complicated process that takes power from people, that will create more institutional inequality.

C. Evans: And opportunities for corruption.

A. Dix: And other opportunities — less accountability to people.

The member for Surrey-Whalley gave — I really commend it, hon. Speaker — just a superb speech in the Legislature on this piece of legislation. I believe, in fact, and this is a remarkable thing.... It's hard to imagine that one could give two great speeches on the same subject, but he did. He talked about this. He talked about the issues that we've raised here. He also talked about some of the other issues that we've raised in this amendment here.

It's outstanding what they call these kinds of amendments. They call them, if you read the book written by our distinguished Clerk, reasoned amendments. This is a reasoned amendment. I'd just like to read it, because I think that people should understand fully why it is we oppose this legislation.

We oppose it because it undermines local democracy. The member for Vancouver-Hastings spoke

eloquently about that in this House and about what it means for his constituents who use transit, like my constituents do, probably more than most constituencies in the province. I dare say we might be the two leading constituencies for transit use in British Columbia: Vancouver-Hastings and Vancouver-Kingsway.

Our constituents are losing power, and that power is being shifted in this legislation. It also says that the legislation will result in dramatic increases in local property taxes, which it does, and — get this — dramatic increases in transit fares.

Now, hon. Speaker, we've had some. Can you imagine? We know that people who use public transit, who take the bus, who take SkyTrain are disproportionately low-income. They've had a 50-percent increase in fares already under this government. But on top of 50 percent, there's more along the way. And this legislation will assist in that.

[1715]

Why? Because some voices are heard, and some voices aren't heard. Some revenue sources are there, and some have been taken away, but we know what this is going to mean. When you take bus riders out of the process, when you take SkyTrain users out of the process, their voices won't be heard in this process. They're going to see even more dramatic increases in transit fares than we've seen already.

Now, hon. Speaker, what else does the reasoned amendment say? My colleague from Esquimalt-Metchosin went through this, I think, in extraordinary depth, both in the second reading debate and in her remarkable speech on the hoist motion. The member from Esquimalt noted that it won't provide the resources necessary to create the public transit improvements which are so necessary in the lower mainland.

Why are they necessary? We hear about it every day. We have to do something locally. It's why I think transit safety is so important, and it's so important in the constituency of Vancouver-Hastings and the constituency of Vancouver-Kingsway. We need more people to use transit. We need more people to use transit, not less people. We need more people, and we have an obligation to ensure that it's safe.

We are facing a period of dramatic climate change. It's already here. There are areas in the lower mainland today where people who have asthma have serious problems. That's not climate change. That's pollution. It's a serious problem today for people. They are areas where you wouldn't advise people with asthma to live. Now, they don't happen to be areas.... The British Properties are not one of those areas.

I'll give the member for Nelson-Creston, who comes to the lower mainland occasionally.... The British Properties — you might see them. They're not one of those areas.

In fact, you know, it's been said that you think of prevailing westerlies, when cities.... With prevailing westerlies, the wind comes from the west, and it blows the pollution to the east. You can imagine where the areas might be. So there are people who struggle in the Fraser Valley, who struggle in the lower mainland to

do what means everything in life. They struggle to be able to breathe.

We need to make transit improvements now. We need to make them the number one priority now. We have legislation here that will not permit that to happen, which doesn't provide the resources for it to happen. Clearly, in my view, it's not an issue that's sufficiently a priority for the Minister of Transportation. We have seen this again and again, and you only have to read the outstanding speech by the member for Vancouver-Hastings to understand in depth what that means.

We're at a time when we absolutely need improvements to transit. You know, it's great to hear the government say today that they're the positive ones.

Commuter rail — I remember commuter rail. People way out the eastern suburbs of Vancouver called for commuter rail. They couldn't understand why we didn't have commuter rail, going into the 1990s. They thought that it was an idea whose time had come, that it was an idea that made sense.

There were some people against it. One of them was the Leader of the Opposition of the day, now the Premier. He was against it. He didn't think commuter rail would work. He thought it would be a disaster. He thought it wouldn't work; it would fail. But, thankfully, the people who lived in the eastern suburbs of Vancouver, out to Mission, didn't listen to the now Premier. They supported commuter rail. They support it every day by taking commuter rail.

We need more of that. We need more of that in the lower mainland. We need it because we need to do something about the fundamental environmental issues of our time. And we have a piece of legislation that deals with public transportation that doesn't address that, that weakens our capacity. It doesn't provide the resources necessary to do what's been done so many times by so many governments of different stripes.

It takes power away from those that would benefit from those changes most. It takes power away from those that need to travel farthest to their jobs, who can't afford to buy a car, who can't afford to pay high gas prices. It takes power away from them and gives it to unelected people selected by the Minister of Transportation. Not selected because he's selecting people to a board but selected because of the kind of private organizations they represent — fine private organizations, but just one of thousands of private organizations.

[1720]

Would I dare call the Vancouver Board of Trade a non-profit organization? I might. There are thousands of non-profit organizations, but they're the selected ones. They are the select. They are the patricians. They are the retainers of our time.

This bill establishes and gives them overwhelming control over our transit system at a time when people are calling for public transit. They're calling for improvements in transit every day. Every day the B-line bus is jammed. People want more. Every day, SkyTrain, when it gets to Joyce station.... It comes all the way from the Deputy Speaker's riding, the member for Surrey-Green Timbers.... It comes all the way to Joyce,

and when I wait there for public transit at Joyce station, you can't get in, many days.

People can't afford to drive. They live near the SkyTrain station. The SkyTrain is jammed. Their interests should be heard. The Minister of Transportation doesn't think they're sufficiently expert. God knows, the Minister of Transportation himself hasn't been around.

Ten months after we started raising the issue of transit safety, the Minister of Transportation last week had an idea — ten months later. It's not an idea that's thought out about transit safety. He talked about turnstiles and everything else. It's an idea. He had an idea. It's not a proposal. It's just an idea.

It was a slow news week for the government, a government out of gas, so they sent the Minister of Transportation out to the front. They said come up with an idea. Try and get in the newspaper. We're failing. We're flopping in the House.

M. Karagianis: Announce something.

A. Dix: Announce something. That's what he did. But his ideas didn't come from community participation. He wasn't listening to local, elected officials. His ideas didn't come from anywhere. They came from the ether. He had a conversation with his ministerial assistant, and they said: "Let's do a press release." That's where those ideas came from. That's his approach to transit planning. It's exemplified in legislation that simply doesn't represent the needs and demands of the citizens of Vancouver-Kingsway and of the ridings across the region. They are not heard. They have no place at the table.

When you're in a democracy, nobody gets to decide whether you have a place at the table. Nobody should be allowed to say that the room is closed, and only these groups are to be represented. Nobody should say that, but this government is saying it in this legislation, and it's wrong. Nobody should say it.

That's why, hon. Speaker, it seems to me so important that members of this Legislature, especially members on the government side, not in cabinet, who surely still have some connection with their constituents.... They don't have the same level of retinue around them, if I dare say that. They should understand.

I said retinue. I did not say residue. Retinue around them — they don't have that.

They should understand. They should be standing up in this House. They should be pointing to the Minister of Transportation and saying: "Enough. We're going to speak out on behalf of our constituents, whose voices are being taken away by this shameful legislation." They should be saying that. I encourage them. That's why I moved this motion, this important motion, to give them a chance to do that.

The member for Vancouver-Fraserview — many of his constituents take the bus down to the Joyce SkyTrain station or 29th Avenue, the connections. Their voices are being taken away. This motion, this amendment, would say: "We will not pass Bill 43 now. We will not pass it because it undermines local democracy.

We will not pass it because it will see increases in transit fares. We will not pass it because it doesn't provide the resources necessary for public transit." Those citizens of Vancouver-Fraserview deserve to be heard in this Legislature.

That's why I've moved this motion, which gives an opportunity for all members, but especially those members who represent transit communities like Vancouver-Fraserview and Vancouver-Kingsway, whose people should be heard in this debate and who should be most frustrated that a minister of the Crown.... It's "minister of the Crown," not "minister is the Crown." That a minister of the Crown would take this approach to local democracy is shocking.

[1725]

We need to debate this more. We need to defeat this now. The time has come now for members on the government side to stand up for the same principles that elected them to this Legislature, to not allow this subversion of local democracy to stand. The issues are important. They're fundamental. I challenge them to stand up and participate in this debate. These are the most fundamental of issues. It is not right.

B. Ralston: They're muzzled.

A. Dix: One of the members has called out that they're muzzled. I don't believe that. People have the right to stand up and have their voices heard.

It is wrong. I think this legislation takes us in absolutely the wrong direction. We have given more opportunities, more chances for debate. This legislation must be stopped. People say: "Wow. Aren't you taking too long?" I say to them that the member for Esquimalt-Metchosin, the member for Vancouver-Fairview, the member for Vancouver-Hastings, the member for Surrey-Whalley, the member for Burnaby-Edmonds, the member for New Westminster, the member for Columbia River-Revelstoke, the member for Nelson-Creston.... All of them, I can tell you, are just getting started in laying out what this ridiculous legislation will do to local communities.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

In this particular presentation.... I am hopeful that there will be more to come, because it would be absolutely wonderful to have another opportunity — for me, anyway. There are obviously other issues involved in TransLink. But for the constituents I represent, for my family, for myself, we take transit in our community. The member for Vancouver-Hastings knows this well. We take transit.

The issues here are our issues. They're issues that people face every day. They're issues of safety. They're issues of getting home on time. They're issues of spending time with your family. That's what the issues involve here. They can't and shouldn't be allowed to do this. They have turned the world upside down. They have seen inspiration where inspiration shouldn't be.

Public institutions should be controlled by elected officials. I know it's customary and that some people

out there agree with the snideness towards democratic processes that inspired this legislation, but we are the guardians of those processes. That snideness shouldn't play in here. We should be against that. I call on all members of this House, every single member of this House, to rise and say what they think about local democracy, about this legislation, about the privatization of the public interest.

That's what this legislation is about. That's what this motion is about. I encourage all members of the House to defeat this legislation by voting for this motion. I just wanted to lay that out — members over there. I just want to make sure they understand: defeat this legislation by voting yes on this motion.

I look forward to hearing from them in the debate, because they are representatives of the people too, and their voices should be heard as well. I challenge them to speak. I challenge them to explain why a bill that undermines local democracy would be passed by Members of the Legislative Assembly. I ask all members of this House to support this motion.

C. Puchmayr: I rise in favour of the amendment. I do so for some very important reasons. The reasons are primarily those of the elimination of democracy in the governance of TransLink.

Bill 43 has some inherent flaws in it. The manner in which the panel is chosen is absolutely unacceptable in this modern day and age. We live in a society that is the envy of many societies in the world because we have democracy. We have the ability to come into this chamber. We have the ability to debate. We have the ability to elect people in our communities to look after the interests of our communities, to look after the interests of our constituents and our citizens.

[1730]

That is a model that, granted, has some growing pains — all the time. It continues to have issues, but yet, when you look at all the other models in the world, there is no model that's better than democracy.

The process going forward in the manner of the bill introduced by government, I think, turns back planning at a time when we really need to be creative and imaginative about how we plan future transportation. We live in such a challenging geographic area in British Columbia and in a lot of the world, when you look at the very limited growth ability that we have in the Cascadia airshed and the Fraser Valley airshed. We are extremely limited as to how we can plan transportation.

You hear models about other countries and other cities that merely build highway after highway, and you only have to go south of the border to see the impacts that this type of development has on the people and the quality of life. You can't build your way out of it. It is absolutely impossible. All you're doing is getting some temporary relief while you're building the highways, while you're building a new bridge or twinning a bridge.

What that does, first of all, is create an incredible ability for development to quickly go into those areas of future growth, to densify some of those areas. It puts

our greenspace and wetlands at risk. It allows somebody to go in, make some very quick money and get out. Then, within a very short period of time, the people who have moved in there — thinking that they're going to be moving further from their places of employment but have an easier commute to and from work — realize that that the gridlock has returned. It doesn't take very long before you understand it. You only have to look at the Alex Fraser Bridge as a prime example of that.

You can look at any area — Houston, a city that spends \$1 billion a year on trying to build their way out of transportation. It does not work.

When we're talking about an airshed that is as sensitive as the Cascadia airshed.... As the member for Vancouver-Kingsway so eloquently alluded to, that airshed has certain offshore flows that are very, very consistent. The majority of the air that goes from the Pacific comes to the west. It usually comes up from the south in sort of a swirling motion, and it pushes that air from the west coast over into Bellingham, Seattle and then up into our area.

What happens is that in days of serious air inversions there have been some serious warnings about air quality. I've heard the warnings as far east as Hope, where they will warn you during days of air inversions because it is absolutely unsafe for people with respiratory issues to be going outside. That's as far as Hope. People think that when you're living in Hope, you're almost in the mountainous area where you can get away from the pollutants created in the Fraser Valley and live there in beautiful, pristine country and breathe beautiful, clean air. That isn't the case.

That's why the governance model is so important. It needs to have a lens of the community on it. It needs to have people engaged in development who take in all of the serious consequences of the wrong type of development and who analyze those, as has already been done by the livable region strategic plan.

The livable region strategic plan was certainly a very creative plan; it was a good plan. It also triggered the growth strategies of different communities. For instance, I know one of the biggest challenges in my community is densification. I think that it is in many communities. People are concerned about the growth and the densification in their communities.

[1735]

The livable region strategic plan came to my council. The fact is that we have five SkyTrain stations in my community. We accepted a significant amount of growth.

You know, some people think that growth makes money for a city. Growth makes a lot of money for the people who are developing the land and putting in the developments that are creating the growth, but growth is quite a significant cost to the city.

When we looked at the livable region strategic plan and accepted the growth strategies, the numbers that were attributed to New Westminster and the needs that we had to meet by the end of the plan, we did a systematic approach. We accepted a significant amount of development so that we could do our share for the

region and assist the air quality of the Fraser Valley while we took our share of the growth.

It wasn't without some significant growing pains. People lost their view corridors. People were no longer able to have an endless view of the Fraser River. The densification was going on in certain areas further downtown. With the fact that we had to densify, we ended up having to build and add on. We have to build a new swimming pool now because an area that has had some significant densities in the last little while, since the plan has come out, requires infrastructure. We require parks, libraries, schools.

There are a lot of components to growth that actually cost the taxpayer. So the New Westminster taxpayer, by virtue of buying into the livable region strategic plan, also had to buy into the costs of that densification. We end up struggling to try to meet the impacts of that densification.

Now you take the growth that the city has incurred through the plan, suddenly turn the plan upside down and change the governance of development. You change the governance and management of transportation and give it to a group that may have different, vested interests. I think the real test on the livable region strategic plan was the fact that the United Nations awarded the GVRD for the brilliant planning they engaged in to give us what was going to be the growth until 2021 and beyond.

Now you take that plan, tear it up and then hand-pick a group of people.... I'm not saying that the people that will be in charge of the growth in the future are sinister or that they don't mean well. They probably do mean well, but their focus isn't going to be: "If I do something wrong, I'm going to be defeated by my community, or I'm not going to sit on this board anymore." Their focus is possibly going to be influenced by the peers of that group.

When you look at the TransLink Governance Review Panel that was made up, you had Marlene Grinnell, who is the chair of the panel. She was also the mayor of Langley from '93 to 2005. I remember when she came to TransLink opposed to the vehicle levy. She made some arguments that people in the Fraser Valley may have a household with three, four or five cars, so the cost of the vehicle levy on the family would be higher than for someone in New Westminster whose family may have one car, or I think the average was about 1.5. That was the argument that was made: it was costlier for somebody living in the Fraser Valley than for someone living in New Westminster.

The argument doesn't carry a lot of weight, because the alternative to that argument is taxing a property. You may have a senior who has no car, who does the right thing, who takes transit everywhere he or she goes and who is now paying on a property. And the people who are using the vehicles are not paying over and above for the specific vehicle. That was the argument against a vehicle levy.

[1740]

People don't realize this, but every vehicle that's on the road costs the infrastructure about \$2,000 a vehicle per year. So other than that you pay for your insurance,

fuel and maintenance, the fact that that vehicle has to drive on a road is a cost that's incurred by that vehicle. The more vehicles on the road, the more emergency rollouts you have with fire, with safety and rescue, with ambulances; the more accidents you have; and the more street lights and sidewalks you need to put on the side of the roads so the pedestrians are safe.

The actual vehicle itself — just directly having that vehicle on the road — is a significant cost, not to mention the impact that that vehicle has on the air quality. The vehicle has an incredible impact on the air quality, as we know. Hundreds of thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gases go into the atmosphere and into our airshed every year because of what that vehicle brings to our community.

Having a governance model, having a board that's sort of.... Well, I mean, it is handpicked; let's face it. You take 15 people that the board chooses, and those 15 people are whittled down to nine, I think, and the mayors get to choose the nine. To me, that is not anything near the democracy that's required.

The nine people are going to decide on taxation, so this panel of mayors gets to choose nine people out of 4 million British Columbians and say: "You go out, and you decide how transportation is going to be delivered in the lower mainland region from here on."

I mean, their initial plan is a ten- and 30-year plan that has absolutely no input from the public. The public can't even go and say, "Wait a minute, the United Nations said: 'You did this right in the livable region strategic plan.' Why aren't you implementing that in this next plan?" They don't even have the right to ask the question. They can't even access the plan, be a component of the plan or contribute to the plan.

Someone who rides the bus all the time can't go there and say: "Wait a minute here. If you're going to build this bridge, why don't you make it more transit-friendly as opposed to single-occupancy-vehicle-friendly? Wouldn't that make more sense?"

Why wouldn't you have an environmentalist or a doctor who specialized in health and breathing issues sit on there, to say: "This is what you're going to create by having this type of transit system. This type of planning is going to cause such an impact on your airshed, and here's the growth of that impact from now until the end of the plan"? They can't even have the most preliminary, basic discussion of that. They don't even have the right to go put that position forward.

Who does put their position forward, and why are these different groups on this plan? The board of trade, which we have.... Ours is called the chamber of commerce. Burnaby's is a board of trade. Surrey calls theirs a board of trade. The Vancouver Board of Trade is the board of trade that's on this and that is going to decide who the nine people are that the mayors are going to choose.

I tried to find out who the members were. Maybe I could get an idea of what to expect by who their membership is. I went on the Internet; I couldn't find their membership on the Internet. I phoned the switchboard number, and I said: "I'm on the Internet here. Show me

how to get to the site that I need to get to, to see who your members are." I was told that that is only information for their members.

It's fairly elitist or fairly exclusive that a member of the public can't even contact the Vancouver Board of Trade to find out who the members are. Who are the people that are going to make those decisions? Who are those people? I can't even FOI it. I have no ability to even find out who the members are.

[1745]

The other side, they laugh at that. You know, we are seeing democracy being taken away from the people of British Columbia, and we're seeing it replaced by a handpicked board. They don't even know who it is.

I find it peculiar that the members are making some comments now, because when we had the debate, other than in the introduction by the Transportation Minister, only one member spoke on second reading. That member was from West Vancouver-Capilano, I believe.

As we heard earlier, the air quality up there is quite nice. I've been up in the North Shore mountains, looked down and seen the blanket of pollution that sits over the Fraser Valley. It runs all the way out, as far as the eye can see; I've seen it. I hope the other side gets up and debates this. I hope the other side gets up, looks into those cameras and tells the public why they want to see democracy completely eliminated from transportation decisions. I really would want to see that.

It was so silent over there that all you could hear was the polyester on leather as they were squirming uncomfortably in their seats. That's all you heard.

Interjection.

C. Puchmayr: Oh, I'm sorry. These are cloth. They must have been sitting on their Armani booster seats.

Again, how can these nine people — which these mayors are going to choose — dictate future growth strategy, dictate the air quality, dictate whether it's single-occupancy vehicle, whether it's transportation-friendly or whether it's bicycle routes? There's no input. There is absolutely no input from the public whatsoever.

In my community this will create gridlock. If we decide that we're going to build single-occupancy capacity as opposed to transportation capacity, we will be building gridlock into my community. I shouldn't say we will be. We already have it, but it will increase. There is no doubt about it. It will increase.

We have hundreds of thousands of cars a day that aren't New Westminster trips, that are coming from other areas and going through New Westminster — Monday to Friday about 300,000 cars a day going through New Westminster. What they're doing is cutting through New Westminster. Let's say you twin the Port Mann Bridge, and you have it twinned by someone that really isn't concerned about anything other than getting more tolls on that bridge. If you have someone that's building a business model for a P3, for instance, why would you build a bridge that has a SkyTrain going over it, when a SkyTrain is equivalent to ten lanes of traffic?

If you're going to put that out to your friends that are building a P3, they're going to look at that and say: "I don't want to build that bridge. I want to build the bridge that has ten lanes of single-occupancy vehicles, because that means I make more tolls and more money." That is the potential of the type of governance that you get. It's driven by economic reasons as opposed to health reasons, air quality reasons, cycling reasons and transportation reasons.

There is no check or balance on how transportation is going to be built. We have to trust them. We have to trust this faceless board of people from the board of trade, accountants.... I still don't understand the accountant part. I know you can do a lot of things with numbers.

Interjection.

C. Puchmayr: I think you can do a lot of things with numbers, and the member wants to make some comments. I hope he gets up and speaks and makes his comments to the cameras so that the people in his community know what he feels.

[1750]

Deputy Speaker: Member, please direct your comments through the Chair.

C. Puchmayr: Mr. Speaker, I hope he speaks to the cameras so that the members in his community know what he feels about democracy in governance of transportation. It's not only going to stop here; it will continue on and on.

We have people who are going to be building transportation infrastructures that we are not able to challenge or engage in mitigation of for our communities. We are not able to get a positive effect for a transportation system that is green, that provides clean, green transportation for the lower mainland — an area with an airshed problem that is incredible and that will get even worse.

You only need to go down to Los Angeles to see what building transportation in the same capacity will do to us here. It will cause some incredible, incredible issues with air quality.

I really fail to see the advantage of building this kind of a model. I really would plead that the other side get up and debate this; I really do. I think they need to get up. They need to tell the public what is really on their mind.

Would they really trust this type of a transportation system if the end results were more greenhouse gas, more gridlock, fewer choices for transportation and huge profits for people developing our agricultural land and our greenspace? That's really what's at stake here. That's why we're making this amendment. Because we believe strongly that this is the wrong direction to go.

The steering committee, the review panel.... Obviously, the chair already had some concerns with the previous structure. I certainly saw that by the busload of people brought out to a TransLink meeting — while

I was on city council — who were opposed to the new taxation structures.

Then we have a member who is also recently appointed to the board of Partnerships B.C. That certainly concerns me. That looks like it's a person who is going to be influenced by a private-public partnership. The comments I made just recently on that are: the motivation to create a transportation system that takes transit and rapid transit as a primary consideration is not going to balance out. That decision will not balance out if you're trying to maximize a profit of a P3, and that is really unfortunate.

The other one is a member who is a vice-president of a multinational development company that specializes in industrial real estate. Those are sort of the motives behind this new structure. The motives should truly be motives of people of British Columbia — of cyclists, of transportation users. I certainly would question why we would not have that as a part of any kind of a governance structure. There needs to be more democracy, not less democracy.

One of the real concerns in why we introduced the amendment is certainly with respect to how the taxation can take place. How can you have an unelected board imposing taxes on different categories of businesses in a different manner? How can someone come forward and say: "Well, we're going to raise taxes on houses, single-family dwellings, but we're not going to raise the same amount of taxes on industrial lands or on commercial properties"?

[1755]

Industrial lands benefit from transportation, and so do commercial properties. To have a non-elected board being able to set those types of tax rates.... It's absolutely beyond me that somebody would even engage in that. It could create such an unfair tax strategy in our communities, and it could really have some very dire and negative impacts, especially on the elderly.

Granted, there's a law that permits seniors to defer taxes on their properties. But even though that's in place, there are very few seniors in my community that will actually do that. Seniors are very proud people. Many seniors will not defer their taxes, because they've been paying them all their lives. Even though that's in place, they won't defer them.

Yet we have seniors who are paying taxes to such a degree that.... They own their houses outright, and they can barely, on their old age pension cheques, afford to pay taxes on their properties.

It really troubles me that a board can now say to those very seniors: "We're going to tax you, but we're not going to tax someone else in the equivalent manner." The way the legislation reads, it could actually be: "We're not going to tax anybody but the single-family owners."

The tax with respect to raising transit rates.... Again, before any gas tax can be added on, there's a requirement to tax homes first. There's a requirement to raise an equal amount on transit fares, and then they have an ability to gain that equal amount on the fuel tax.

Fuel prices can fluctuate 10 to 15 cents in a week, up and down, sometimes for no reason whatsoever. They can just fluctuate. Yet this governance board

doesn't permit us to say: "Well, we're going to put one cent per litre of that tax towards a better transportation system." This legislation doesn't permit it. Before they can do that, they have to tax the home again, and they have to tax unfairly.

To put all of these components in place without the public having an input is absolutely shocking to me. It's not surprising from the other side. We've seen the other side — independent power.... We've seen the Significant Projects Streamlining Act. We're seeing the continuing dismantling of the system of democracy, and it's being replaced with positions that the general public have no ability to challenge.

I shudder to see, again, this most significant part of democracy here being stripped away from the people of British Columbia in favour of this quasi-handpicked board.

N. Macdonald: I'll be speaking in support, of course, of the opposition motion that intends, or seeks, to stop Bill 43. Of course, that was put forward for a very sound reason, which is that Bill 43 fundamentally undermines local autonomy, local democracy. All members of this House should be concerned about that. Certainly all members of the NDP, the opposition, take it seriously.

[1800]

Now, this will be my third time speaking to this bill. In second reading I took the opportunity to outline the concerns that I had around local democracy. We put forward a hoist motion intended to slow this down for six months so that we could have a sober second thought at legislation that is poorly considered. When given the opportunity to speak, I talked about the fact that this governance model, with its lack of accountability, its undermining of democracy, was a governance model that we need to fight vigorously.

Given a third opportunity, I will again speak and talk about a bill that fundamentally undermines local democracy. When we have a motion put forward that asks this bill to be defeated because of that weakness, as I said, it is something that you would expect all members to be concerned about and all members to wish to speak to.

The fundamental flaw, then, is with the governance structure. It is something that even at a distance.... I come from a rural area. Columbia River-Revelstoke is well removed from the lower mainland. Bill 43 is going to put in place a governance structure that will run transportation policy in the lower mainland, stretching all the way up the Fraser Valley to close to Hope, all the way up towards Squamish, Whistler — a massive area.

What we know, of course, is that transportation policy touches very directly on people's lives. It will have a massive effect on the public. The idea that something that impacts people so profoundly, that will touch people's lives in such an important way, would be removed from democratic oversight, from direct democratic accountability, to me seems ridiculous. Even well removed from it, to have that sort of a structure again put in place in British Columbia is deeply concerning.

I can tell you that in the Kootenays.... The culture of the Kootenays is that we like to make decisions for ourselves. We feel that we understand our needs. We understand our issues best, and anything that seeks to remove our local control, our local say, about decisions that would impact us, we would fight. If a structure like this was going to be put in place in the Kootenays, there would certainly be an expectation that the MLA that represented those people would be up speaking about it. They would absolutely be up explaining.

Now, if you are going to impose this system, then it needs to be explained. I have heard from my fellow opposition members, repeatedly, arguments around democracy. I have been up three times to outline my concerns, and yet none of those concerns have been contested. They have been conceded. I'll just remind members what has been conceded to date.

First, I put it to you that TransLink is going to be run by another B.C. Liberal-appointed board. It will be a board made up of B.C. Liberals appointed by the B.C. Liberal government. It will....

C. Evans: Anybody who disagrees, speak up.

N. Macdonald: I have not had anyone stand and contest that fact. Not one.

Interjection.

Deputy Speaker: May I remind all members to allow the speaker to have the floor so that we can all hear his comments.

Please continue, Member.

N. Macdonald: Although I appreciated the member's.... I will try to continue.

That has not been contested. So we will accept the view, then, that this is going to be another B.C. Liberal-appointed board.

The second point that I would make and a point that has not been in any way contested — in fact, I think, because it is incontestable — is that when you put a B.C. Liberal-appointed board in charge of things, you risk some really deplorable standards of management. We've seen that in a number of ways. When I was running for election, despite many things that you would think would strengthen the local MLA, many things that you would think would put that MLA in a good position and a project.... I'll give an example: project Kicking Horse.

[1805]

Kicking Horse Canyon is a project that I think is wonderful. That was in place, and yet 57 percent of people in Golden voted against that MLA. They didn't vote against her because of the project. That was well-supported. That's a project that is 75-percent Golden residents working on it, that employed massive numbers of people — well supported.

But 57 percent of people in Golden voted against that candidate, and I'll tell you why. As I went door to

door, where was the anger? What were people upset about, that they would turn against that member? It had to do with Interior Health and a board structure that was unaccountable, a board structure that was made up....

I don't know the other health authorities as well as Interior Health, but when I looked at that board during the election and what people would say as you went door to door.... They would say: "They're all a bunch of Liberals. They're a B.C. Liberal-appointed board, and they are there for all of the wrong reasons." They weren't there because of expertise. They weren't there for any reason other than the fact that they were in some way loyal.

Other members for the Kootenays will have heard the same thing: that that made people very, very angry. They did not accept that that was a reasonable thing for a government to do, and people in the Kootenays, for one, rejected it. They would expect their member to say very clearly at every opportunity in this House that we, in my part of the province, would never quietly accept a board that is imposed upon us and that is not accountable and open to us.

During the election, given the opportunity, that's what people did. There was a massive switch, and I see my compatriots that would say the same thing as they went door to door. So it was Interior Health and that board structure that, as much as anything else, frustrated people.

The idea that you would have a similar sort of board structure for TransLink is something that I cannot imagine why members that represent any part of the lower mainland would find acceptable. I just cannot see how that is a reasonable way for us to go forward.

What frustrated people about Interior Health? It was not that tough decisions were being made. I can remember that being said at an open house.

L. Mayencourt: Point of order. The speaker is giving us a lot of information on Interior Health, but not too much on the piece of legislation which he's supposed to be speaking to. So I would just ask that the Chair direct....

Deputy Speaker: Thank you for your comments, Member.

C. Evans: First, hon. Chair, the point of order is not a point of order. Second, he isn't even right if you accept his comments. This hon. member is creating a parallel of an existing situation to show the net result of a hypothetical situation.

I can't imagine more germane comments, and I would encourage the member to keep his seat unless he has a real point of order.

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

The Member for Columbia River-Revelstoke to continue.

N. Macdonald: Thank you very much. I have more here, of course. Interior Health — the board structure there is, of course, germane. It is absolutely germane.

It is the same frustration the people in the lower mainland will feel when they have imposed upon them a board that is chosen because they are loyal or they have donated money or they are in some way connected to the B.C. Liberals. Hardly the right reason to be put on a board in charge of important transportation policy.

The second point: is that going to be an effective governance model? The experience from the Kootenays with Interior Health, and I suspect around the province, is an absolute no. It will not be an effective governance structure. It is fundamentally flawed in a way that everyone here in the House should understand.

It is undemocratic, and it is not going to be in any way held accountable. How can that work? We have 500 years of history in this building based upon the premise of democracy that people.... Five hundred years of the Westminster system that's represented here in this building....

Interjections.

[1810]

Deputy Speaker: Members.

Speaker, please direct your comments through the Chair.

N. Macdonald: Absolutely. This is the Westminster system. It has emerged over 500 years. It has emerged based upon the principles of democracy. It has emerged upon the principles of accountability, of ministerial accountability, or certainly accountability for money that is collected from people and spent.

Let's be clear. TransLink is going to collect a tremendous amount of money. It is going to spend that money. It is not that board's money. They are public funds. The tradition here is that if it is collected from the public, they have a say about how it is spent. They have that say through an elected board. Yet this legislation has nothing to do with that. This legislation eliminates democratic control. It eliminates accountability.

That's Interior Health. I can tell you, going door to door, that that is the thing that defeated the Liberal MLA that preceded me. It is Interior Health and a board that made not only unpopular decisions.... Be clear. Not only were they unpopular; they were poor decisions.

They were poor decisions, and poor decisions come, inevitably, when you have that democratic accountability removed. When you make a decision here and you have to go and face the public that sent you here, it gives you pause to think. It should. You have to go and look them in the eye and be accountable for what you have said and the way you have voted.

So if you remove that, you are inviting poor decisions. Why would anyone in this House support legislation that was weakening the decision-making process? Why is that any sort of a system to put in place? This is weak legislation — fundamentally weak because of that flaw.

As I said, I would invite anyone, any government MLA — I mean, this place is supposed to be about debating — to stand up and make a compelling case

about what is incorrect in what I've said. Nobody has stood up and made that argument.

All right. Let's talk about another board, a board that I know well, that I think the people of the province know well, and that I love to speak about. It is, again, a wonderful example of what you get when you take a B.C. Liberal-appointed board. You remove any democratic oversight or accountability, and you put them in charge of public funds. What happens?

I think a wonderful example to use again is the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project board. That is not dissimilar to what we're going to put in place to run transportation policy in the lower mainland.

If you live in the lower mainland, you should be speaking to your representative and asking them to make the argument about why that model is something that should be put in place for the lower mainland for TransLink. Why is that a model that you should be looking towards?

Let's review that Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project board, that B.C. Liberal-appointed board, that undemocratically chosen and unaccountable board and what their record of achievement is.

First, was it indeed chosen more for how much money they donated, for their connections? I mean, I remind people — and I think most should know this — that you had somebody who was a defeated B.C. Liberal candidate and who, despite the Premier's views that people wouldn't move politically into the civil service, somehow ended up as a deputy minister and then moved seamlessly through on to the board of the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project. So you had people like that.

You had a former B.C. Liberal president who somehow smoothly moved on as a deputy minister and then from there on to the board of the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project. So it definitely is a B.C. Liberal-appointed board that runs the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project, just as this legislation proposes that it is going to be a B.C. Liberal-appointed board that runs transportation policy in the lower mainland.

[1815]

You ask yourself: was that Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project board competent? Well, the Auditor General.... You don't need to ask me. I don't think you would need to ask anyone. You could easily find.... Let's see. We could ask the Auditor General.

What does the Auditor General say? The Auditor General says really clearly that it was a board that lacked the skills to run this sort of project. It's a board that decided to start a project without a plan as to what it would look like at the end. Is that something that you want to do with your transportation policy? Do you want a board that is going to start something and part-way through decide where it's actually going to end up, what the project is going to look like at the end?

It seems pretty clear to me that even at the most basic level, you would start a project with a plan as to how it would look when it finished. But what we have seen with the Vancouver Convention Centre expansion project is that the board didn't think to do that. So

using that as an example, and IHA as an example, I think people in the lower mainland would want to think very carefully about accepting that sort of governance model for their transportation policy and for their transportation services in the lower mainland — remembering how incredibly expensive transportation policy is and how tremendously it impacts quality of life.

You would also ask: was the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Project board accountable? Well, it has proven to date to be in no way accountable. They started a project without a plan. You'd think somebody would be accountable for that. So far, nobody. You would think that having promised that you were going to spend \$202 million of provincial taxpayers' money on a project that ends up — we don't know where it's ended yet — to be over 600.... Was it \$600-some-million, a growth of \$400 million, a 200-percent overrun?

In fact, an unparalleled bungling. You would think that somebody would be held accountable, but on that board, nobody was. There is no accountability. There has never been a public project that has been more bungled in its construction than this one. The board that was in charge, that was put in place by the Premier and the B.C. Liberals, which is made up entirely of B.C. Liberals, was in no way held accountable.

That should concern people, because you are going to get the same structure now imposed upon TransLink so that your transportation policy is going to be made to that very low standard. Is it accountable? No. In no way. Was IHA accountable? No. It was set up to not be accountable. In fact, it was set up to be a screen so that decisions could be made elsewhere that nobody will be held accountable for.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Have we seen accountability at any other level? Have we seen accountability in this House? We have not. Instead, it gets pushed off to this board. They're accountable. How are they accountable? In no way — nothing that we can see.

Everything about that speaks to a highly imperfect system, and yet this is what government is putting forward as the answer to the complex and expensive problems of lower mainland transportation. So there's every reason to be concerned about that.

As I've said before, transportation touches people's lives. People need to move safely. They need to move efficiently. If a transportation system works well, people have time at home. If transportation works well, they can move safely. If transportation systems work well, then people can move in a way that is economically feasible for them to move.

But it also is, of course, going to be expensive. Decisions will be made about who is going to pay for different infrastructure development. Are those people going to be accountable in any way?

Well, the experience that I've had with these sorts of board structures would argue that they are in no way going to be competent in the decisions they make. They are not going to be accountable for the decisions they make, and all of that should be a profound problem for people in the lower mainland.

The question is: is there an option? Is there a better way of doing it? Well, we should defeat Bill 43. We should start there and start to look at an institution or a way of doing things that makes sense, that matches the traditions we have in Canada and in British Columbia that have been passed to us over that 500 years of evolution.

It makes sense to look at those principles and set up structures that are in line with some things that everyone here says are important to them. We should set up structures that are democratic. We should set up structures that are accountable. I think a previous speaker — and if it was a previous speaker, of course, in this debate, it's going to be on the opposition side — talked about how we came here to have power. There is nothing about most of us that is exceptional in any way, other than that we were chosen by our areas as their representatives. That is the only thing that makes us exceptional.

Now, I think sometimes we forget that, but that's the truth of it. We come here. We have power to make decisions. We are exceptional only because of that — because we are part of a democratic institution. We represent something special, which is democracy and accountability. Why would we set up any sort of a system for something as important as transportation policy that would be inconsistent with that?

What are ways that it can be done better? Well, what the NDP has talked about and believes in is empowering communities, empowering individuals, and that comes through democratic institutions. To me, an absolute must is that the TransLink board be democratically elected. It has to be in some way accountable.

Now, if the argument is made that the TransLink board is in some way imperfect, that's an argument that, first off, needs to be made, and then, based on that argument, I can either accept or not accept. I don't live in the lower mainland. I live well removed from it. My experience with the TransLink board is therefore limited. You could make that argument on the government benches, and I could either accept it or not accept it based on the strength of those arguments. I've not, to date, heard anything, but the possibility remains that you could make that argument.

If you were making the argument that TransLink needs to be improved, then it needs to be improved based upon certain principles — one being that it be democratically elected. Second, it has to be directly accountable to those who have to live with the decisions of TransLink. It has to be directly accountable to those who live with the implications of decisions made on TransLink. That, again, is an important point. Third, that taxation not occur without this elected, accountable board — another important fact.

What I'd like to do now, Mr. Speaker, with your assistance, is to retain the right to continue my comments. I would like to, as well, note the time, and I

would like to propose to the House that we would adjourn and take up...

Mr. Speaker: Move adjournment of debate?

N. Macdonald: ...this discussion later.

I would invite the government minister to now do your part, and with that....

Interjections.

N. Macdonald: This is my first time doing this, so it is with great pleasure that I've done....

Mr. Speaker: Does the member move adjournment of debate?

N. Macdonald: Yes, I do, and I retain the right to continue my comments.

N. Macdonald moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. G. Abbott moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 6:25 p.m.

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