



Third Session, 38th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF
DEBATES OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
(HANSARD)

Monday, November 26, 2007
Afternoon Sitting
Volume 25, Number 5

THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

ISSN 0709-1281

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
(Entered Confederation July 20, 1871)

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 26, 2007

The House met at 1:34 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Introductions by Members

D. Thorne: Today I have the privilege of having four guests in the gallery that I would like to introduce. I would like to introduce Donna Crosby. She is the president of the Riverview Horticultural Society in my riding. Her husband Ken Crosby is a member of the Riverview Horticultural Society.

I am also introducing Carole Edwards, who is a member of the Burke Mountain Naturalists, and Mary Brown, who is a member of the Burke Mountain Naturalists and the Riverview Horticultural Society.

[1335]

These four hard-working volunteers are representing many, many people in the communities of Port Moody, Coquitlam and Port Coquitlam who are listening today to see the petitions around the Riverview lands tabled at three o'clock. I would like the House to welcome these four people as if they were 4,000.

Tributes

EUNICE MICHAEL

Hon. P. Bell: I'm saddened to inform the House that a good friend of mine, Eunice Michael from Mackenzie, passed away on November 11 of this year. That date is even more relevant in that her husband Tom is a World War II veteran who flew Spitfires in the European theatre during World War II. I know it was a very tough Remembrance Day for Tom that day.

Eunice was an incredible individual — a real pioneer in the Mackenzie region of British Columbia and someone who had a wide variety of careers, from log scaler to nurse to private entrepreneur. She contributed tremendously to the community and, in fact, was awarded the Citizen of the Year in Mackenzie this past year.

Eunice is what makes Mackenzie a great place to live, British Columbia a tremendous province and Canada a great country. Certainly, I know that she will be remembered fondly by all who knew her.

Introductions by Members

G. Coons: I'd like to welcome Steven Pratt into the House today. Steven grew up in Winlaw, which is in the Slocan Valley. Steven has lived in Victoria for six years and drives for Victoria cabs. The member for Nelson-Creston and I had the opportunity and the privilege of having lunch with him today.

Please make Steven welcome.

Statements (Standing Order 25B)

RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL LANDS

D. Thorne: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the Riverview lands, which are located in my constituency of Coquitlam-Maillardville.

In 1904 the province of B.C. dedicated 405 hectares of land on the west side of the Coquitlam River to provide treatment facilities for the mentally ill. Within ten years B.C.'s first provincial botanist, John Davidson, had planted over 300 native species at Riverview, including 30 species of trees, to form the first provincial botanical garden and arboretum.

Since the 1960s the hospital's population has declined, and nearly 300 hectares were sold in the 1980s for market housing. Over the years there have been many rumours that the province planned to sell all or part of the remaining Riverview lands. This prompted the city of Coquitlam to set up a task force in December '03.

The task force recommended that the Riverview lands be kept in public ownership with enhanced services and housing for mental health and wellness; that the botanical heritage and ecology of the lands be protected; that centres of research, education and innovation be established on the site; and that opportunities be provided for heritage, arts and cultural endeavours.

The Riverview lands are an important heritage and ecological treasure. The prospect of them being covered with dozens of condo towers is of great concern to residents not just in my community but throughout B.C. Thousands have signed petitions against commercial development of the lands. I will be submitting these later this afternoon.

In closing, I urge the government to follow the recommendations of Coquitlam's task force and preserve the ecology, tranquility and mental health purposes of the entire Riverview site.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

M. Polak: Last night as the sun set, a small group of people gathered at Innes Corners in Langley city. The group included representatives from Ishtar Transition Housing Society, the mayor, city and township councillors, the wife of the local MP and the chief superintendent of the Langley detachment of the RCMP.

Together with those who have been touched by the tragedy that is violence against women, we gathered to remember the victims past and present and to stand in solidarity with those who continue the struggle to change an increasingly violent world.

[1340]

We were not alone. Sunday marked the beginning of an international effort to put the issue of violence against women squarely before us. For 16 days around the world, people from all walks of life will involve

themselves in acts of remembrance and initiatives of hope. While the violence that confronts us on the six o'clock news usually highlights gangs and gun fights, the fact remains that fully 40 percent of homicides involve individuals who have an intimate relationship. Many, if not most, of these victims are women and children. Domestic violence touches everyone because it affects our society in such a deep and profound way.

The message of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women is that each one of us has a role to play in the solution. Let each of us find that role and work together for a future that is safer for women and girls.

C. Trevena: I too rise today to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. In Canada we usually mark December 6 as the day to commemorate women victims of violence. That's the sad anniversary of the day in 1989 when 14 women were killed at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal — killed because they were women.

The 25th of November was designated by the United Nations as the international day because that marks the anniversary of the assassination in 1960 of three sisters who were political activists in the Dominican Republic. It was a killing ordered by the dictator Rafael Trujillo.

Violence against women is not bounded by political ideology. It's as likely to happen in a democracy as in a dictatorship. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with the abuser usually being someone known to her.

Violence is wrong, and violence against women is an insidious violation of human rights. It destroys homes and communities. The costs of violence are huge. In South Africa a study has found that women who are beaten are 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV. In the U.S. it's been estimated that intimate-partner violence costs \$5.8 billion a year in medical care and lost productivity.

UNIFEM, the United Nations development fund for women, has launched an online petition today, www.saynotoviolence.org. It hopes to collect hundreds of thousands of signatures from people who say, "Enough," from people who want to see that our domestic laws are strengthened to stop violence against women, that services for women such as women's centres are supported and that, internationally, organizations place violence against women high on the political agenda.

We should all be willing to state that one attack on one woman is one attack too many.

CROSSROADS HOSPICE

I. Black: I've risen in this House a few times to pay tribute to the staff, the board, the volunteers and the community supporters of Crossroads Hospice located in Port Moody but serving the entire Tri-Cities area.

Friday was their annual Treasures of Christmas gala fundraiser. It was once again a very elegant affair

— and a full house, with about 400 in attendance. I spoke Friday night and reflected on my personal history with Crossroads. It was not an easy speech to deliver, as you can imagine, but it's likely one of the easiest ones I've ever had to write. I got to reflect on my friends who've received care there and on other friends whose artwork fills its halls.

Crossroads has evolved into a touchstone of sorts for me, as it has for so many in the Tri-Cities whose lives it has touched. Crossroads brings an element of comfort, understanding, support and dignity to all those receiving care and to the family and friends who are faced with what is often such a sad journey. It is from those staff members that we learn that we're not alone, that our fears and our sadness are to be expected, and that they can be overcome.

Part of their fundraising and awareness campaign for this year was on display on Friday night. It involves a calendar, the photos of which are a breath of fresh air. Patients, staff and volunteers alike have taken a cheeky look at life, showing that those who provide and receive hospice care can find laughter in their days and even be a little provocative.

Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to advise that each member of this House will be receiving one from me later today or tomorrow.

In Crossroads Hospice we see some of the best sides of humanity. As I have every year since being elected, I ask you to once again join me in paying tribute to the special men and women who work in hospice care all across British Columbia but particularly at Crossroads Hospice.

[1345]

FARMERS' MARKET NUTRITION AND COUPON PILOT PROJECT

J. Kwan: I rise today to make members of this House and the public aware of an exciting new program being coordinated by the B.C. Association of Farmers Markets. Farmers' markets on Commercial Drive, Trout Lake and the West End — and, in fact, everywhere in our community — are loved by the public because they can access local, nutritious food directly from farmers.

The farmers' market nutrition and coupon pilot project is about promoting the health of B.C. families by providing low-income pregnant women and low-income families an opportunity to buy fresh B.C.-produced farm products. This is a program which supports our local farmers. It increases the sale of fresh B.C.-grown farm products at farmers' markets. It assists coupon-recipient families to buy directly from B.C. farmers in a family-friendly setting.

This project works closely with local cooking and skill-building programs to help coupon-recipient families to increase their nutrition, knowledge and skills in preparing fresh B.C. farm products. All coupon money stays within B.C. and supports the local economy of our communities.

The program has operated in all five of the regional health authorities in B.C. — Prince George, Kelowna, Courtenay, Coquitlam and Vancouver. The project has

served a range of populations — most significantly, aboriginal and immigrant and refugee families. In this time, we've seen families living on limited incomes access B.C.-grown fruits and vegetables and other nutritious B.C. farm products while receiving nutrition and cooking-skill education.

A recent evaluation of the project found the following. Participants are accessing the coupons and using them at local markets. The program is benefiting low-income families, particularly those with children in the zero-to-six age group. Farmers are participating and contributing beyond the basic requirements of the project. Participants are being introduced to new local foods and are learning how to prepare local foods.

The pilot program has proved to be an overwhelming success and has shown tangible benefits to low-income families, B.C. farmers and communities at large. I ask all members of the House to join me in thanking Anna Kirbyson and the B.C. Association of Farmers Markets for this wonderful initiative.

STEVESTON COMMUNITY CENTRE

J. Yap: I rise today to recognize an important anniversary in my riding of Richmond-Steveston. On November 3 the Steveston Community Centre celebrated its 50th anniversary. Since 1957 the centre has been pursuing its goal of a positive spirit of Steveston by providing a place for cultural, social and recreational opportunities for all members of the community.

The centre was established by the Steveston Community Society, a volunteer organization which has been in existence in Richmond in one form or another since 1891. Today the Steveston Community Centre boasts a wide range of facilities, including a gymnasium, multipurpose meeting rooms, the Japanese-Canadian Cultural Centre, a martial arts facility, indoor and outdoor tennis courts, a lacrosse box, two softball diamonds, a fitness track, a playground, a picnic area, outdoor basketball courts and a water park.

The centre also hosts programs that make a difference in our community. For seniors, programs include wellness clinics and recreation. For youth, there are programs that help encourage leadership and community spirit. SWAT, or Steveston with Active Teens, is a group of youths who make a difference by planning events in Steveston supporting important causes and giving back to the community as part of a team.

The Steveston United Peers group brings together youth with developmental disabilities in a safe, supervised environment. This program helps all youth to develop a better understanding of diversity and improved social skills in an inclusive environment.

And of course, every July 1 the centre comes alive with the Canada Day salmon festival and parade.

I ask the House to join me in thanking society president Ben Branscombe and all the staff, directors and volunteers both present and past who have made the Steveston Community Centre such an excellent hub of activity and community spirit. We wish them the very best for the next 50 years.

Introductions by Members

Hon. R. Thorpe: I have the pleasure of introducing to the House Rosalind and Sonya Chapman. Rosalind recently at a charity auction bid to have lunch with — this is their words — "three of the finest media reporters in British Columbia: Les Leyne, Vaughn Palmer and Keith Baldrey."

Would the House please make Rosalind and Sonya welcome.

[1350]

Oral Questions

CHILD POVERTY IN B.C.

C. James: For the fourth year in a row, British Columbia is the province with the worst record on child poverty. B.C. Liberal policies and inaction are making it harder for families to get by, and the result is that more and more children are living below the poverty line. It's a shameful and alarming record, and one this government refuses to address.

My question is to the Minister of Employment and Income Assistance. At a time when his government is sitting on record surpluses, how can he justify his government's shameful record on child poverty?

Hon. C. Richmond: We on this side of the House take the well-being of children very seriously. We are dedicated to improving their lives. This report uses data from 2005. Since then, we've taken some major steps. For example, in this year's budget we increased the welfare rates for all those on assistance.

This opposition, including their leader, voted against it. When they had a chance, year after year after year, to do something about rates and increase them, they did nothing. Not only did they not increase rates, but they drove the economy in the ground so that any of those who wanted to leave income assistance couldn't find a job.

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

C. James: Well, it's typical — typical of this government to point fingers everywhere else except looking at their direction, their policy and their inaction that caused the child poverty stats we see today.

The minister should take some time and actually read the report, actually pay attention to this issue. It's not simply about families living on income assistance. The report shows that over half of B.C.'s poor children have a parent who has a full-time job. These are hard-working British Columbians trying to make ends meet, and this government is just putting up barriers at every turn.

Housing is more unaffordable than ever, tuition has never been more expensive, and families are paying more for the basics. The Premier's own Progress Board said that the government is failing on this issue, but they've done nothing to reverse the trends.

My question is again to the Minister of Employment and Income Assistance: what is he going to do today? Not in the future, not way in 2020, but right now, today — what is he going to do to reverse those numbers and do something about child poverty?

Hon. C. Richmond: Last month the C.D. Howe Institute came out with a report on poverty, and I don't remember anyone questioning me about that report. It was authored by Professor Richards of Simon Fraser University, and he validated that the best way out of poverty is employment. People are much better off, including children and families, when they're working.

Since 2001, we have created 370,000 new jobs — coincidentally, almost the identical number of the people who were on welfare in the '90s. Since 2005, we've put in a major rental assistance program available to all families, whether they're on income assistance or not, earning \$28,000 or less a year, and this opposition voted against it.

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

C. James: The minister can talk all he wants, but it's very clear that nothing is making a difference — nothing this government is doing — except putting more children into poverty.

Some 48 percent of B.C. children living in poverty are raised by single mothers. This government has done nothing to help them. In fact, it was this government that cut income assistance rates, that cut child care programs, that closed women's centres and that refuses to raise the minimum wage.

[1355]

It is very clear that this government's priorities are wrong, and the result is the report we see. For the fourth year in a row, B.C. is number one when it comes to child poverty. But what are this government's priorities? A convention centre that is \$400 million over budget and ministry board rooms that cost over \$500,000.

My question is to the Minister of Employment and Income Assistance. Just how many children could he have helped with the \$400 million overrun that he put into the trade and convention centre?

Hon. C. Richmond: Going by the numbers that I have in front of me — and they're today's numbers, not from 2003 or 2004 or 2005 — in the '90s....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Minister, just....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Continue, Minister.

Hon. C. Richmond: They don't like to hear about that dismal decade.

Interjection.

Hon. C. Richmond: When you were in cabinet.... When that member for Yale-Lillooet was in cabinet, one in seven children was in a family on welfare. The number now is one in 30.

We have the lowest income taxes in Canada for anyone on a low income. Anyone earning less than \$16,000 a year pays no provincial income tax. We've eliminated MSP premiums for thousands of British Columbians, and since 2001 over 111,000 people have been taken off the welfare rolls and put back to work.

J. Brar: If you listen to the answers from the minister, it's very clear that this minister is out of touch with reality. Let's be very clear that this report by Campaign 2000 came out today, and it is the fourth year in a row that B.C. has had the highest level of child poverty in the country.

Last year this minister stood up in the House and said exactly the same thing that is being said today by this minister. I would like to ask the question to this minister again. Does this minister believe that only one in 30 children lives in poverty in British Columbia, as he said last year in this House?

Hon. C. Richmond: I think if any government should be ashamed of their record in dealing with child poverty, it should be that party over there when they were in government. We take the welfare of children very seriously, as I've said, and we still feel that the best way to help children is to make sure that their parents can find a job.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

J. Brar: It's hard to understand what the minister means by "taking seriously." Let me add to list of what the minister has said. Since this government took over, the number of homeless people in the province has doubled. Since this government took over, the gap between rich and poor has doubled and is the highest in the country.

[1400]

Too many people in British Columbia are being left behind by the policies of this government. Clearly, the government policies are not working when it comes to reducing child poverty in British Columbia.

I would like to ask the minister again: can the minister tell this House what steps he's going to take specifically to reduce child poverty in British Columbia?

Hon. C. Richmond: This government spends about \$70 million a year to assist people who are on income assistance get back into the workforce, and our policies are working. Since 2001, 111,000 people have been assisted to leave welfare and get back into the workforce.

S. Fraser: By increasing child labour.

Hon. C. Richmond: Oh, listen to him.

I will reiterate. In the late '90s one in seven children lived in families who were on social assistance or income assistance. Now the number is one in 30. In the late '90s one in every ten British Columbians was on welfare.

N. Simons: The minister's answers are absolutely shocking. They're not just shocking to the opposition. They're shocking to most British Columbians, who feel that this government has failed children in this province.

We're six and a half years into his mandate, and he's still relying on his speech from two years ago in which he said the numbers were outdated. Well, this minister is outdated. The child poverty situation in this province is as bad now as it was two years ago when he mentioned that same statistic.

What is the minister going to do to address the issue today?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. C. Richmond: Earlier this year we increased shelter and welfare rates for British Columbians. How did you vote?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. C. Richmond: For those on income assistance wishing to leave income assistance, our record is pretty good. We have managed to take 111,000 people off, and the average stay of a person expected to work is now four months.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

N. Simons: I think that answer was.... I would categorize it as lame. The minister knows very well that there were a lot of things in that budget we voted against. There were a lot of things we voted against in that budget.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Take your seat.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members. Listen to the question; listen to the answer.
Continue, Member.

N. Simons: I don't know if the minister opposite knows who these children are, but it's more than statistics, and it's more than regurgitated answers from two years ago.

This is a child poverty situation that leads Canada. We are number one in child poverty — number one. The minister is always proud about everything else he seems to be making up, but we're number one in child poverty.

I know who those children are. I see those children. They go to school hungry. They go to school with clothes that aren't the same as their friends in school, and this minister is thinking about regurgitating old statistics.

This is a problem today. What is the minister going to do now to address this serious problem in British Columbia?

[1405]

Hon. C. Richmond: One of the things we did as a government this year was to make sure that anyone with a low income — under \$28,000 a year — could receive shelter assistance so they could spend more money on their children.

MINIMUM WAGE

A. Dix: The minister said his plan is working. Tenth, according to Campaign 2000, in child poverty — our record in Canada. Statistics Canada says more people per capita are below the poverty line than in any other province in Canada. The Minister of Finance's own Progress Board says that we're ninth in Canada in the social condition. How is this plan working? Not very well, hon. Speaker.

He talks about voting. That minister, the Minister of Employment and Income Assistance, voted a 54-percent wage increase for the Premier.

Let me ask him this question. Will he as Minister of Employment and Income Assistance today stand up and support an increase to \$10 in the minimum wage?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. C. Richmond: According to all the latest statistics, the people that are living below the poverty line — and that's a debatable line.... It's heading in the....

Interjections.

Hon. C. Richmond: It is.

An Hon. Member: One thing for sure: you're above it.

Hon. C. Richmond: And so are you, Mr. Member, and I intend to stay above it.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. C. Richmond: The reduction in poverty is headed in the right direction. It's not going necessarily

as fast as we would like it to, but it's going very, very quickly. People are now able to find work in British Columbia, and even the C.D. Howe Institute backs up our philosophy that the best thing we can do for children and families is to make sure they have work.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

A. Dix: Not making progress. Tenth place, worst in Canada in child poverty, and the minister talks about not making progress. Let me ask the minister this, because he voted in this House.... His government voted in this House to cut the budget of the Ministry of Children and Families by 23 percent. His government voted in this House to cut income assistance for single mothers. His government reduced the minimum wage by 25 percent.

Here we are today, 2007. I ask the minister this. Will he support an increase in the minimum wage today?

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. C. Richmond: Let me repeat a quote that came out last month — not two years or three years ago — from the C.D. Howe Institute from a professor at Simon Fraser University: "One of the best ways to tackle poverty is through a strong economy, because we know that people and families are better off when they're working."

J. Kwan: It was this government that changed the welfare rules that actually claw back child maintenance for families and children. It was this government who actually brought forward rules that made it really hard for low-income people to access support. This government dismantled the social safety net, and this minister knows it.

[1410]

Today 174,000 children are living in poverty under this government's watch — the worst record in B.C. One-third of the food bank users are children, and yet this government has done nothing to assist children who are in need. They have done nothing to raise the minimum wage and in fact took the reverse order and brought in the training wage.

My question to the minister is this. Why won't he assist the working poor today? Why won't he assist children by ensuring that there is a lift in the minimum wage?

Hon. C. Richmond: Let me remind the member that it was this government this year that raised welfare rates and that opposition that voted against it.

A family of four earning \$30,000 or less pays \$1,364 less in provincial income tax and MSP premiums than they did previously.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

J. Kwan: The fact is that the annual income on welfare of a single parent with a child is \$16,282 a year, which works out to be about \$10,541 below the poverty line. The fact is that this government has made it even more difficult for people to get on income assistance.

We have some 250,000 people making less than \$10 an hour. We have the highest child poverty rate for four consecutive years in British Columbia.

My question to the minister: does he think that it is appropriate for families to be making less than \$10 an hour? If he doesn't think that is appropriate, will he stand up and tell his government and this Premier that it is time to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour?

Hon. C. Richmond: I think it's appropriate for people in British Columbia to be able to find employment.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Minister, take your seat.
Continue.

Hon. C. Richmond: To that end, we have placed 111,000 people back into the workforce since we took office in 2001. We think that's important. It's a drop in people on assistance of about 44 percent in the last six years.

D. Chudnovsky: We all heard, a few minutes ago, this minister say that he thinks we're doing pretty good — and that's a quote: "pretty good" — when it comes to child poverty in this province.

So 25 percent of the kids in the province are living in poverty. We're tenth out of ten for the fourth year in a row, and this minister says that we're doing pretty good. It's as if he doesn't know and understand that we're talking about real people. We're talking about real children.

From this minister, we get excuses, we get theory and we get abstractions. But he can do something very concrete for the people for whom he's supposed to advocate. That's his job. He can do something very concrete. He can stand in this House today and say that he supports a \$10-an-hour minimum wage that will do a little bit to improve the lives of the people that he's supposed to advocate for. Will he say that today?

Hon. C. Richmond: What I said was that we are headed in the right direction. We are making some progress, which is more than your party did when you were in government. Your progress was all the other way. In fact, you had 375,000 people on welfare. You measured your success by the number of people you had on income assistance.

[1415]

I think that we are headed in the right direction. We are finding work for people. People now at least have a job that they can go to without leaving the province, and they have a chance of bettering their lives. To reiterate what I've said and we've said all along, the best thing

we can do for children is make sure that their parents can find a job.

HOUSING STANDARDS FOR INCOME ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

B. Ralston: The minister talks about progress in British Columbia, but recently the fire commissioner in Surrey shut down a house, a single-family house, which housed 17 people living in compartments in the basement, described by health officials as squalor. The mayor of Surrey attacked this situation as "a human warehouse." In this case, something was a little bit unusual. All of the rental cheques were provided by the Ministry of Employment and Income.

What steps is the minister taking to ensure that these people get the kind of accommodation that every human being deserves?

Hon. C. Richmond: We have a task force in Vancouver and the lower mainland that does just exactly what the member asked for. We go out and make sure that clients of our ministry are indeed living in the accommodation they're supposed to be. We work with the health people and with the police forces to make sure that bylaws are being adhered to. We've also increased — not in my ministry — the housing budget by three times since coming to government in 2001.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

B. Ralston: The mayor of Surrey again: "If the goal of the respective ministries is to protect these people, they're falling short." So the minister may say that there's some program on the ground, but it's clearly not working.

What steps is the minister going to take to ensure that these people enjoy the kind of housing that everyone deserves?

Hon. C. Richmond: We have a very dedicated staff out there who go to extreme lengths to find suitable housing for our clients. A good example was lately, when a house was closed in Vancouver. Our staff worked literally around the clock to house those people. In fact, they even got a letter of commendation from the city of Vancouver. So we take it very seriously, whether the opposition thinks we do or not. Our dedicated staff work very, very hard to see that they have the best accommodation possible for our clients.

MINIMUM WAGE

R. Fleming: The minister has said that dead last, tenth out of ten, for four years running in Canada is going in the right direction for him and for his government. Today he doesn't get it. Today, in question after question, he doesn't understand that we're talking about devastating poverty rates for children who are in families where the parent has a job. We're talking about the working poor.

So the question to the minister again... A \$10 minimum wage would put \$4,000 a year more into a single family household. That's food, that's clothing, and that's a hand up out of poverty. Will he endorse it? Will he ask the Premier to do it and make this government introduce a \$10 minimum wage?

Hon. C. Richmond: The member talks about the working poor. I don't think he heard what I said when I said that anyone making \$28,000 a year or less is entitled to shelter assistance now in the home they live in so that they can stay in the place they live, have more money in their pockets, can put more food on the table for their children and make a better life for their families. That happens instantaneously, not at some promise down the road.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

[1420]

R. Fleming: This is an income crisis, which is leading British Columbia to be number 10 — dead last — in child poverty rates in Canada. We're not the poorest province, mind you, but we have the highest incidence of child poverty in the country. It's shameful.

Will the minister support income policy that will put more money into the hands of the families and the children in British Columbia that are living in poverty today?

Hon. C. Richmond: I've already told the opposition several times. We put a program in place to put more money in the hands of people, and you voted against it.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. C. Richmond: There is one item that the people of the province remember very vividly — of being number 10 in the province. We started out number 1 in 1990, and we ended up number 10 in 2001.

[End of question period.]

D. Routley: I'd like to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Petitions

D. Routley: This is a petition from 280 of my constituents who are calling on the government to restore protections for manufactured home owners.

D. MacKay: I have a petition signed by 76 people from 24 communities throughout British Columbia asking the government to reactivate the Select Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs following the implications of the key issues arising from the Tsawwassen and Maa-nulth treaties.

D. Thorne: I am pleased to rise to table petitions signed by almost 6,000 residents throughout British Columbia requesting that the Riverview lands in Coquitlam be reserved for mental health and community purposes and not be sold for market housing.

M. Farnworth: I too have a petition signed by over 5,000 names, which brings the total to over 11,000 names, on a petition to protect the Riverview lands in the Tri-Cities area.

D. Routley: I present a petition. This is signed by over 120 parents from my riding who are calling on the government to restore full funding to the child care resource and referral services in British Columbia.

Tabling Documents

Hon. W. Oppal: I have the honour to present two reports: the Crown Proceeding Act report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2007, and the British Columbia Utilities Commission 2006-07 Annual Report.

Point of Privilege

(continued)

D. Routley: I rise today in response to the matter of privilege raised by the Minister of Health on Thursday morning regarding my constituent Karen Haarala and her 89-year-old mother.

The minister was refuting concerns expressed by my constituent about the level of care her mother was receiving at the Lodge on 4th in Ladysmith by reading a letter from the CEO of the Vancouver Island Health Authority. The facts that I brought to the House have been confirmed in writing by my constituent Ms. Haarala.

In response to the point of privilege raised by the minister, I am now going to lay out the dispute in facts and therefore establish that the minister's comments were, in fact, not a matter of privilege. Second, I wish to express my disappointment that the minister would raise this matter and dismiss my constituent's concerns without ever talking to a member of the family in question.

Mr. Speaker, I am about to read from a letter sent to me yesterday from Ms. Haarala. She starts the letter by describing her mother's condition and the 24-hour care she requires. She writes:

"Recently I have felt very tired and overwhelmed at times caring for my mother's needs so she could be home and cared for instead of being in an institution. I just needed a break, and home care nurses arranged for my mother to have a two-week respite stay at the Lodge on 4th."

[1425]

In her letter she provides a time line that includes:

"October 19. Arrival at the lodge. I unpacked my mom's clothes and arranged them on hangers in the wardrobe in her room. I brought a schedule recording all her inhaler medications and times when it was administered. There were also other medications she needed, and of course, oxygen had to be provided.

"When I returned, I visited my mom and found her wearing a hospital gown, diapers, and she had bedsores.

The most critical one was located at the base of her spine. It was large, open and bleeding. She complained of pain in her buttocks. The staff, who I found to be very caring and hard-working, said they didn't have enough time to do all they were required to do. I spoke to LPNs and care workers of my concerns of her not being mobilized, and of our family doctor saying that she needed to be turned every two hours and have physiotherapy.

"When I asked, 'How often does physio come in?' nobody had the answer. There seemed to me to be a breakdown in communications. Only LPNs are allowed to give out medications and seem to be always rushing around to accomplish their goals. The staff are wonderful and hard-working. The problem is: there are simply not enough of them.

"I voiced my opinions one day, and Sue Abermann, the director, noticed I was very distressed. She apologized to me for my mother having suffered because of their newness. She stated there was enough staff. I disagreed."

She goes on to say that on November 19 she went to administration offices on the second floor at 9:10 a.m. She says:

"I asked the receptionist to make me an appointment with the head of patient care, Joan Roberts. The receptionist said that she didn't make appointments, that she was not in and that she did not know her schedule. I asked the receptionist to make me an appointment with the director, Sue Abermann. The response was again the same. I asked the receptionist to make me an appointment with the social worker. Once again, I was given the same response. I asked the receptionist: 'Is there anyone that I can speak to?' The receptionist replied that there was a payroll person in. I left very frustrated.

"An appointment was finally made later that day by Ms. Roberts and myself. The appointment was to be at 10 a.m. the following day, November 20. On November 20 I arrived at 9:51 a.m. I was told that Ms. Roberts had just left the building, and the receptionist seemed surprised when I told her I had an appointment at ten.

"The receptionist tried to call Ms. Roberts on her cell, but there was no response. The receptionist did not know when she would be back. In all fairness to Ms. Roberts, she did leave an apologetic message on my answering machine later in the day."

She goes on to say:

"We are now going into the sixth week, and I have great fears concerning my mother. She is very frail. My hope is that she can come home soon. I still maintain that the problem at the Lodge on 4th is a staffing problem. I commend the staff there, who are working in an impossible situation. They really deserve to have an addition to their shifts. I often have seen them run right off their feet. It is not their fault. If my mother's needs couldn't be met, then I should have been informed.

"I am sure that there are others in the same situation. What happens when there are more acute residents? What about safety?"

Mr. Speaker, I'll table this letter, and I urge the Minister of Health to read it. I also urge the minister to speak with family members before rising in this chamber to cast doubt on their experiences. I invite the minister to hear from family members at a public forum taking place in Ladysmith on December 1.

I will send him details — and I believe my office did about a month ago — and I hope to see him there, so he can hear in person from families that are directly

impacted by the government's failure to resource seniors homes properly.

If there was an independent representative for seniors, these kinds of disputes and facts would not have to come before the Legislature. I submit for your perusal the full statement from the family, and I trust that you will indeed find that the point of privilege that the minister raised is just a dispute in facts.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Member. I'll take both submissions under advisement.

[1430]

Standing Order 81.1

ADOPTION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS SCHEDULE

Hon. M. de Jong: I rise to advise the House that the government and the opposition, via the Opposition House Leader, have come to an agreement pursuant to Standing Order 81.1(1) with respect to the completion of the following bills for debate: Bill 44, the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act; Bill 45, the Maa-nulth First Nations Final Agreement Act; and Bill 46, the First Nations Education Act — and for debate through all of the various stages on those bills to conclude by the end of the day on Thursday, November 29, 2007.

However, an agreement was not reached between the Opposition House Leader and me with respect to several pieces of legislation pursuant to Standing Order 81.1. Those bills, to specify: Bill 39, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2007, and Bill 43, the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Amendment Act, 2007.

I therefore move the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 81.1(2), and that motion is as follows:

[Pursuant to Standing Order 81.1 (2), on or before **November 29, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.** all remaining stages on Bill (No. 43) intituled *Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority Amendment Act, 2007* shall be completed and disposed of. At **4:00 p.m.** on the date mentioned, the Speaker and the Chair of Committee of the Whole will forthwith put all necessary questions for the disposal of all remaining stages of the said Bill without amendment or debate. Any divisions called on the second or third reading of such Bill may be taken in accordance with Standing Order 16 and all other divisions will be covered by Practice Recommendation No. 1. Proceedings under this motion shall not be subject to the provisions of Standing Order 81 or the Standing or Sessional Orders relating to times and days of sitting of the House.]

I have a copy of that motion for the Opposition House Leader as well.

[1435]

Motion approved on the following division:

YEAS — 39

Falcon	Reid	Coell
Ilich	Christensen	Les
Richmond	Bell	Krueger

Roddick	Hayer	Jarvis
Nuraney	Whittred	Cantelon
Thorpe	Hagen	Oppal
de Jong	Taylor	Bond
Hansen	Abbott	Penner
Neufeld	Coleman	Hogg
Sultan	Bennett	Lekstrom
Mayencourt	Polak	Hawes
Yap	Bloy	MacKay
Black	McIntyre	Rustad

NAYS — 31

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

Orders of the Day

Hon. M. de Jong: I call committee stage debate of Bill 44, the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act.

Committee of the Whole House

GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION TARGETS ACT

The House in Committee of the Whole (Section B) on Bill 44; K. Whittred in the chair.

The committee met at 2:40 p.m.

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

Leave granted.

Introductions by Members

D. Routley: It is my privilege to introduce a friend of mine, longtime Duncan city councillor Sharon Jackson, who has served the community of Duncan with dedicated devotion to duty and firm commitment to the principles of fairness and equity.

I would ask the members to please help me make her welcome in our House — her House.

Debate Continued

Section 1 approved.

On section 2.

S. Simpson: This is part 1, the "BC Greenhouse Gas Emission Targets," section 2. Section 2 lists the targets to be established for 2020 and 2050. It says: "The following targets are established for the purpose of reducing BC greenhouse gas emissions: (a) by 2020 and for each subsequent calendar year, BC greenhouse gas emissions will be at least 33% less than the level of those emissions in 2007."

Could the minister tell us what analysis was done to come to the number of 33 percent?

Hon. B. Penner: The member will remember that we spent a considerable amount of time during estimates debate this spring on this very issue. I can pull out the *Hansard* transcript from that debate if he'd like. In fact, I'll ask my staff to send that in to me now. The answer will be the same.

S. Simpson: I appreciate that the minister may want to reread *Hansard*. This isn't about estimates now. This is about a piece of legislation and the creation of a law.

Maybe the minister could tell us how that number was arrived at and what analysis was done in order to get to that number.

Hon. B. Penner: The debate that we had around the estimates process this spring is completely germane to this legislation, because this legislation puts into law what we already committed to in the throne speech. The member spent a considerable amount of time in the Legislative Assembly in the spring asking about how those targets that were contained in the speech from the throne were arrived at.

What we've done with Bill 44 is put those throne speech commitments into law. I think that's the appropriate thing for us to have done.

S. Simpson: As the minister will know, hon. Chair, one of our biggest criticisms about this is the total and absolute lack of any discussion with the people of British Columbia about the government's climate change plans and climate change initiatives. The people of British Columbia, those people who would be interested in the government's move on climate change in this law that's coming forward....

Is the minister suggesting, then, that he's going to ask those people to all go back...? Or maybe the minister for the people of British Columbia would like to explain and answer the question for the people of British Columbia who might be interested in Bill 44.

[1445]

Hon. B. Penner: As the member will recall from our extensive debate around this in spring — and we used

up a fair bit of time at the Legislature at that time — the government was wanting to be a leader in North America in terms of addressing the causes of human-caused climate change. So we took a look at what a number of other jurisdictions have committed to in North America.

We also worked with ministry staff and consulted with people outside of government, as well, on some of the ideas they had in terms of what they thought was not just achievable but also economically viable.

We settled on the 33-percent target over the 2007 baseline. As time has gone forward in terms of the inventory of data that's collected by the federal government on greenhouse gas emissions — and as the member knows, the federal government does that work on behalf of all provinces — the data has become more and more precise. That is the reason why we chose 2007 for the baseline and 33 percent as our reduction target for 2020.

S. Simpson: Maybe I'll just lay out the challenge I see. In this legislation — and we'll talk a little bit about this — and in the consequent work that went with it... The Premier announced the climate action team — the panel of people, including a number of recognized experts who will be working from now through to the end of July to talk about 2012 and 2016 emission targets that are referenced in the bill and will be providing some guidance to government on that.

Then the government could take another six months to ponder the recommendations of that team as to whether those are recommendations that the government wants to step up and accept. We also know, and the minister has talked about, the work of the secretariat and the cabinet committee and some 170-plus meetings that have been held by that body, either the secretariat or the cabinet committee combined, to talk about these things.

The challenge here is this. We're providing about a year or more to figure out 2012 and 2016 targets and how to get there, and that's fine. The question I have is: how did we get to targets in a month or two, before any of those personnel were in place, at 33 percent, when today we're going to take more than a year to decide 2012 and 2016?

I'm trying to have confidence in the 33 percent when I see how much work is going into 2012 and 2016. Could the minister explain the thinking here so that we can have confidence in this number?

[1450]

Hon. B. Penner: I just want to correct something, an impression that the member might have left for people who are paying attention to this debate. The climate action team's role is not simply to come up with interim targets for 2012 and 2016.

If the member refers to the third paragraph of the news release that was issued on November 20 when we announced the appointment of the climate action team, it says that their job is to help the government identify interim targets for 2012 and 2016, and also to "identify

further actions in the short and medium term to reduce emissions and meet the 2020 targets."

As well, they are to provide advice on the provincial government's commitment to become carbon-neutral by 2010. They have three distinct different roles that they are being asked to play, so they're being given some time to do that. Their assignment is due at the end of July 2008.

The member will also recall that we said in the throne speech that 2007 would be a planning year. We would be working with various sectors across the economy in British Columbia — from the volunteer sector to individuals, industry, academia and others, including first nations — to help us set the 2012 and 2016 targets and to identify additional policy actions that the government will undertake to get us to our 2020 targets.

S. Simpson: As to what the climate action team will do and what advice they'll provide, I accept the minister's comments that they will provide advice on a number of things. I would note, though, as the minister will know, that under subsection 2(2) it says in the law that by December 31, 2008, the minister must, by order, establish those targets.

Presumably, the reason for that is because it's going to take pretty much to that time. It's the government's estimate at this time that it will take another year or so in order to be in a position to be able to make those commitments, or presumably the number would be a different number. I'm talking about what's in the law that the minister wants to get passed here. The committee will make its contributions to that as it sees fit.

The question still is this. It's fine with me if the minister wants to get up and say: "The Premier read a few books. The four or five people who worked on climate change in the government before the secretariat was put in place provided some numbers that said, 'Here's what half a dozen places in the world are doing; pick one of these.' The Premier picked it, and now we're going to work to figure out how to make it happen."

If that's what happened, I'm happy to have the minister say that, and we'll deal with that. The problem is this. If there's any substantive evidence — empirical evidence, reports and analysis — to support the 33 percent, release the information. Tell us what it is, and then people of British Columbia will know how we got there.

As the minister will know, there's an ongoing public debate going on in different sectors in British Columbia. Some are saying it's too aggressive. Some are saying it's just right. Some are saying it would be easy to accomplish. There's a whole array of views, and I accept all of those views from different interests.

[1455]

But what does the government say to those people who say it's too tough or just right or too easy, in terms of how they got to the 33 percent? I would just like the minister to tell us where that number came from, in terms of any evidence to support it — real evidence, on paper, that we can get access to.

Hon. B. Penner: I'd like to start by correcting the member again, and this time for his comments about the staff that we have working in the Ministry of Environment. It's not appropriate to disparage the work they do and the importance that this government places upon the work they do.

He said, I think, that there are three or four people that work in the Ministry of Environment on climate change. In fact, we've had a six-person climate change division within the Ministry of Environment, and they've been working on those issues for a long time.

In fact, in 2004 this government put out B.C.'s first-ever climate change plan, and we've been working that plan ever since — the 40 separate items that were identified in that plan. Clearly, we've gone to the next step, including the setting of a 33-percent reduction target by 2020.

The member may need to be reminded that he himself has said on numerous occasions that he supports the 33-percent reduction targets. In fact, he said: "If that's achieved, it will be great." He said that on a former radio program known as *Nightline B.C.* back on February 13, 2007. He's also said, "It is very aggressive," and later: "I think everybody needs to be happy that the government has recognized the importance of targets."

I take it from the member's previous comments that he is committed to and supports the 33-percent reduction target.

S. Simpson: Hon. Chair, the minister is right. I don't question whether it's a good number or a bad number. If we get to 33 percent, that's fine. I have no problem. I just wanted to know how we get there. That would be the question.

The minister talks about the staff. I'm not disparaging staff. But as the minister will know, there weren't very many people working on this file before we got to the appointment of the secretariat.

I would note that the minister might want to learn his facts a little bit. There was a significant climate change plan and report produced by the last government, which was torn up about the time that this government abolished the Ministry of Environment.

The government abolished the Ministry of Environment because it didn't believe in environment. It didn't believe in environment so it abolished that ministry and created Water, Land and Air Protection. It put the resources in. It put the dollars in.

Interjections.

The Chair: Order. Order.

Interjections.

S. Simpson: Unfortunately, though, this government, as we know....

The Chair: Member, would you take your seat, please. Members, we're in committee stage debate, and each member deserves the right to ask a question and to hear the answer of the minister.

Continue, Member.

S. Simpson: As we know, that plan was in place, but unfortunately this government chose to tear up that plan when they abolished the Ministry of Environment back in 2001.

I will accept and I will take it that there was no analysis done before February on the 33 percent, and that number was drawn sort of out of the air. That's okay. I'll accept that. I think that most British Columbians kind of know.... That's pretty common wisdom now among people who look at this issue, so I accept that.

My question now would be this. Since February, since the throne speech has been written and presented in this House — and there has certainly been more work done, a secretariat put in place and a cabinet committee put in place — I'm assuming there has been significantly more work done on getting to the 33 percent.

Could the minister, then, tell us what detailed work has been done to confirm the 33-percent number now?

[1500]

Hon. B. Penner: I certainly don't recall ever seeing any kind of a climate change plan put forward by the previous NDP government. However, if I had, I would have looked at it with some interest, because it resulted in a 24-percent increase in greenhouse gas emissions while the NDP was in office. In fact, the single biggest year-to-year increase in greenhouse gas emissions in British Columbia occurred in the late 1990s, while the NDP was in office and our economy was flatlining.

That's not really the kind of record our government is seeking to replicate. We're trying to find economic opportunities while dealing with the pressing and incredibly important challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Our climate change staff in the ministry has been busy and remains busy following 2001. They have worked to address a number of things — looking at economic impacts and at identifying those options and actions that were doable. That did result in a 40-point climate change plan that this government released in 2004. It also resulted in the additional work that went ahead and a 33-percent target.

The member has asked what additional work we have been doing on that 33-percent target for 2020. Let me make it very clear. We are committed to that target. We are not revisiting whether or not we're going to work to achieve that target. The legislation we're debating today encapsulates that target. We are sticking with the 2020 target, which is a 33-percent reduction from 2007 levels.

S. Simpson: I'll remind the minister. Maybe the minister was so engaged in revisionist history about the 1990s that he didn't hear the question. Since the throne speech in February and since the budget in February, when an additional \$4 million was provided in order to ramp up the secretariat, we've had six or seven

months — whatever that number of months is — till we got to today.

We know there have been a vast number of meetings. The minister has talked about the 170-plus meetings. We know there's been a slide show from the secretariat that's been trooped around a little bit in some communities. We know that Mr. Whitmarsh has spoken to some groups, as presumably have the minister and the Premier and others.

The question, then, is: what work has been done since that time in order to validate the 33-percent number to ensure that we can get to that number?

Hon. B. Penner: The member just asked a slightly different question. He asked: what work are we doing to get us to the 2020 targets? His previous question was: what work have we done in terms of the 2020 targets and the 33-percent reduction? We are keeping to that 33-percent reduction target, and that's why we've brought forward this legislation here today.

In terms of the action items or the work that's required to get us to those objectives of a 33-percent reduction by 2020, the Speech from the Throne did commit to a number of new, additional action items that have not been implemented by any previous government in British Columbia, including a requirement for zero routine flaring at producing wells and production facilities in the oil and gas sector, a commitment to get greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector in British Columbia down to 2000 levels by 2016 and a requirement that at least 90 percent of electricity on a go-forward basis come from clean and renewable sources.

I note that under the previous government, the commitment was a measly 10 percent. We've increased that to 90 percent.

[1505]

Effective immediately, British Columbia requires that if anyone wants to bring forward an application for a coal-fired electricity plant, they have to do so with carbon sequestration technology in mind. That puts us in the lead in North America and, I think, the world in terms of the first jurisdiction to have that policy requirement.

If you take a look at some other action items, we've been building in this province a significant number of clean, 100-percent renewable zero-emission run-of-the-river hydro projects. We're the first government in the history of British Columbia to approve wind power projects. I think we've now approved five of them. The list goes on.

I know the members of the opposition are prepared to sacrifice those green power projects on the altar of their ideology and bias in favour of government-owned projects, but our government thinks it's important that we engage the private sector, as well, in helping us produce cleaner energy and helping us meet our ambitious targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 33 percent by 2020.

S. Simpson: What this side of the House doesn't want to do is be able to address the problem by 2016 by

paying too much for power and then lose that power altogether by 2030, when those power purchase agreements expire, because British Columbians no longer own the power in British Columbia — they're owned privately — and it all of a sudden becomes a better deal to sell that power into California. We end up in a worse situation than we would be in under other circumstances. That's why we'd be much happier if the power that was produced by British Columbia resources was owned by British Columbians instead of by private interests.

We'll move on a little bit here. Maybe I want to elaborate on this. I heard this, I believe it was, back at the time of the throne speech. The government spoke initially of saying.... They used both the numbers 2007 and 1990 in that speech. They talked about it being 33 percent under 2007 or 10 percent under 1990, depending on which level you used.

I'm just wondering what the rationale was for deciding to use 2007 as the baseline to move forward, particularly since, as we'll learn under section 3, the government hasn't yet determined what the 2007 baseline number would be, what the level would be. It hasn't yet been determined. It will be.

The question I have is: why was it decided to use an indeterminate number at this point, rather than, say, to pick a number like 1990, where in fact the government would know where the starting point was now?

Hon. B. Penner: As I indicated in a previous answer a few moments ago, the methodology for calculating the GHG inventory across Canada has been improved over the last number of years, certainly from what it was in the early 1990s. So as that analysis and that methodology have been refined and improved, we have greater reliance on and confidence in the numbers that have been provided to us by Statistics Canada.

In addition, we wanted to highlight the incremental steps, the additional steps that the province will need to take as a whole over the next 13 years to get us to our 2020 targets. Therefore, we thought it made sense to start from the year which we're in on a go-forward basis in setting 2007 as the baseline year. I note that the opposition has done the same for some of the documents that they've put out for their plan.

S. Simpson: Hon. Chair, I'd like to propose an amendment to the bill.

[Section 2 (1):

(b) *By striking out "2007" and substituting "1990"*]

On the amendment.

[1510]

The Chair: Member, speaking on the amendment.

S. Simpson: I've moved this amendment at this time because it is our belief that 1990, particularly around the 2050 number, is a better place to start from. I know that it does make a difference. I will pre-empt the minister a little bit here, I'm sure, in his comments on the amendment. I know that the minister is going to

talk about percentages between 1990 and 2007, and I've had a very interesting discussion with Professor Weaver about this in the last few days.

I think the result of this is that, at the end of the day, if we use the 1990 number, if the program is successful, we will be emitting about ten million tonnes of emissions annually come 2050. If we use the 2007 number, we will be emitting about 14 million tonnes annually come 2050. So it is about a 40-percent greater amount of emissions at the end result and the culmination in 2050. It's our belief that that number should be the stronger number.

Also, there are many — and I would agree with this — who would say that there is going to be much that we're going to learn between now and the next 43 years and that we may even do much better than that as our technologies improve.

There are many who will tell us that zero-emission vehicles will be the standard by the time we get to 2050, that technologies around building construction will be such that buildings will no longer be emitting emissions, and that technology around energy sources.... We will have passed peak oil many, many years prior to that and will be using alternate energy sources — maybe energy sources that we haven't even contemplated yet, considering how fast technology moves and what the next 43-odd years are likely to provide for us.

The government has talked at numerous times about wanting to be bold in its actions. We believe the boldest place for the government to land is to land at 2050, with an 80-percent reduction by 1990. We would encourage the government to make that change.

Hon. B. Penner: It does appear that the opposition is being somewhat hypocritical, since their own documents put out in February 2007 talk about a baseline year being 2007. We believe that it makes sense, for the sake of consistency and public understanding, that we keep a consistent time line. So we've set a 33-percent reduction target for 2020 based on 2007 levels, and we believe it makes sense from a public perspective that we maintain that for when we're talking about 2050 targets.

Climate change is a complicated topic. It can be confusing for the public to follow along, and we're trying to make it as easy as possible to understand exactly what it is the government is hoping to achieve and what we expect.

Now, the member just referenced a conversation he had with Dr. Andrew Weaver. For people who are not intimately familiar with Mr. Weaver's background, let me just provide it to members here.

Dr. Andrew Weaver is a professor and Canada Research Chair in atmospheric science in the school of earth and ocean sciences at the University of Victoria. His contribution to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change jointly won him the Nobel peace prize just a few weeks ago. He shared that, along with the other scientists, with Al Gore, the former U.S. Vice-President.

He has written over 120 peer-reviewed papers in climate, meteorology, oceanography, earth science, policy and education journals. He was involved as a lead author in the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change second and third scientific assessments of climate change, and presently serves on the UN's World Climate Research Program working group on coupled modelling and the United States' National Academy of Sciences climate research committee as well as on the NAS panel on climate feedbacks. He's co-chair of the UNWCRP Intersection Panel and is an editor of the *Journal of Climate*.

Now, my understanding is that Dr. Weaver supports the targets as laid out in this legislation. I'm far more inclined to take advice from a professional scientist than from others, because this is an area that is very complex field when we're talking about atmospheric science and the like.

[1515]

I'll just refer to an exchange that the member suggested he knew was coming. I'll share it with members here on the record. This is from November 21, 2007 on CKNW — last week. He was asked about some criticism about the baseline year and why we're setting it at 2007 — Dr. Andrew Weaver.

The Environment critic for the opposition did a release and argued that B.C. was actually projecting only 58-percent reductions relative to 1990 levels.

"I think he actually made a simple arithmetic error in his calculations, because that's not correct. The reality is that if you take 80-percent cuts at 2007, that translates to 74 percent cuts relative to 1990.

"Frankly, whether it's 70, 80 or 90, the fact is that if you've got to push it above the threshold for existing technologies so that they have to be replaced, then either 70, 80 or 90 does it. It's a moot question. It's the type of political partisanship that needs to get away from this climate portfolio."

This is a bold target. The bold target needs to be met, and it needs to be met through bipartisan efforts.

As I indicated earlier as well, the data from Stats Canada and Environment Canada going back to the 1990 reference point is not as robust as the information that we have available today, due to improved methodologies and improved accounting. That's why we feel comfortable with the 2007 baseline year. It's a number we can have more confidence in.

G. Robertson: I'm just rising in favour of this amendment as proposed by the member for Vancouver-Hastings.

So 1990 is the base year that has been substantiated as the international standard. Many of the European Union countries and American states have chosen 1990 as the baseline standard. It's a little peculiar, and I think there's a political objective here on behalf of this government in choosing 2007. It sounds more dramatic when, in fact, it's the opposite.

It's more important for this government to match what has been laid down as the international standard, particularly as B.C. becomes more and more visible as an international leader on climate change. If this government does back up these intentions in this legislation with

actions that don't contradict the objective of achieving these targets.... Currently most of the actions of this government, in fact, are exacerbating our greenhouse gas emissions, and billions of dollars are being directly invested in increasing emissions.

We have a massive hypocrisy here. For us to be international leaders on climate change, our actions have to match our words, our intentions. Certainly, by not sticking to what is the established international standard as a reference year, which is 1990, the entire Kyoto protocol, which this government has spoken vigorously against from the year that they were first elected into government.... They obviously have issues with the international standards, the Kyoto protocol and all international efforts to lay down 1990 as a base year and achieve reductions from there.

Many of the countries in Europe that made those commitments to Kyoto have, in fact, made significant changes in government policy and regulation and direct investments in achieving the greenhouse gas emission targets. They are achieving targets and succeeding along the lines of the Kyoto protocol.

Again, I think it's this government's choice to continue to avoid the work that's been done internationally to establish 1990 as the target year. I'll just remind the minister that when the opposition proposed 2007 as a baseline, that proposal was tied to an emissions cap in 2007 so that the baseline worked downward from a cap.

That commitment to an emissions cap has not been met by this government. They are showing no signs of wanting to deal with capping greenhouse gas emissions immediately, taking urgent action. Instead, we're looking 13 years down the line before there is any significant achievement here.

[1520]

It is true, again, that many of B.C.'s experts, including Dr. Andrew Weaver and Dr. David Suzuki, have called for 80- to 90-percent reductions from 1990 levels. While it is in their interests to support the government taking this action to legislate targets.... By comparison to the actions that this government has taken in the years to date in power, it's a remarkable change of pace.

I think it's important, in particular for the environmental organizations that have fought so hard to bring the issue of climate change forward, to push and push this government into setting targets. The fact that targets are in front of us deserves some recognition, and I think that's what we're hearing from many of those, particularly those who've worked on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. They have every reason to extend support for the fact that we do have targets.

Now that we do have targets, the opposition wants to make sure they are robust, that they stand up to international standards. There's no reason to back away from this. In terms of boldness, let's be real with this. Let's match what's out there and what the best science and scientists working on this issue and winning Nobel prizes for doing so are establishing as a standard. Instead of fiddling with the dates and going with a number.... We don't even know what it is yet; 2007 hasn't been established.

You can say that the math will be rigorous, that the emissions are more measurable than they were in 1990, but the rest of the world isn't working off of 1990. I will just close by saying that I strongly support setting these targets based on 1990, making them relevant to the rest of the world and making them as strong as possible.

Hon. B. Penner: To add a couple more comments just to underscore again that the data for the 2007 year is going to be much more robust and accurate than the data from 1990. In large measure what StatsCan has done is gone back and tried to reconstruct what the actual emissions were from those earlier years. Back in the early '90s it was not something that was measured on a go-forward basis, so they've had to go back to reconstruct that data. Again, we can have greater confidence in the reliability of the more modern dates.

However, I should also try and dispel some ideas that the opposition is trying to create in people's minds that there's some kind of uniform approach to the setting of numbers. In fact, there is a range of different approaches in different jurisdictions.

The members should be familiar with a report released last year, the *Stern Review Report on the Economics of Climate Change*, published in the United Kingdom by Sir Nicholas Stern. It has received widespread acclaim internationally. In that document, they use 2006 as the baseline. They say that for the objective to stabilize at 450 parts per million CO₂ without overshooting, global emissions would need to be 70 percent below current levels by 2050. That's over a baseline year of 2006.

In addition, the western climate initiative is using 2005 as a baseline year, again out of concern around whether or not there's sufficient accuracy with some of the earlier numbers, particularly for different jurisdictions. So 2005 is the baseline for the western climate initiative.

Then, in terms of what the actual individual targets are for reductions, those also vary by jurisdiction. For example, in the United Kingdom, which is led by a Labour Party government, they've got a piece of legislation before the House of Commons at Westminster right now that calls for a 60-percent reduction below 1990 levels, which would amount to a smaller reduction than what we're proposing in our legislation here today.

Germany has legislation requiring a 45- to 60-percent reduction over 1990 levels. And just a few steps — or I guess a few strokes, if you're swimming — to the south of us Washington State has an objective for a 50-percent reduction. Our goals are very aggressive and extremely competitive with any other jurisdiction, and they are what the scientists are telling us is necessary.

The member may want to take issue with what Professor Weaver has indicated about our act. Certainly, in the conversations that our officials have had with him, he's indicated his support for Bill 44 and the targets which it contains.

[1525]

I think I should just point out, for members and for people who are listening who may not have the benefit of the legislation in front of them, that what we're talking about here is a subsection that says that the B.C.

greenhouse gas emissions will be "at least 80% less than the level of those emissions in 2007." So the legislation does contemplate that we may go further than 80 percent as the science and technology evolves.

The legislation doesn't say that that's a maximum reduction. It says "at least" an 80-percent reduction. Again, that is consistent with the advice that we've received from the scientific community.

[1530]

The Chair: Members, I'm going to call the question on the amendment. Members, the amendment on Bill 44, section 2(1)(b) reads: "By striking out '2007' and substituting '1990.'"

Interjections.

The Chair: Order, Members. Order. Order. Please be seated, Members.

Interjections.

The Chair: Members, you are using up valuable debating time.

Amendment negated on the following division:

YEAS — 31

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

NAYS — 39

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

The Chair: Members, at the discretion of the Chair, I am calling a four-minute health break.

The committee recessed from 3:34 p.m. to 3:39 p.m.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

On section 2 (*continued*).

S. Simpson: I'm going to ask a couple of questions about 2(2) just before I bounce back a little on this.

Under section 2(2), hon. Chair, it says: "By December 31, 2008, the minister must, by order, establish...greenhouse gas emissions targets for 2012 and 2016." Could the minister tell us what he anticipates happening by 2008?

I know that the action team will provide their advice by the end of July. Could the minister tell us what else he anticipates going on over that period of a year in order to be able to get to those targets?

It does seem, quite frankly, like a significant period of time to establish targets. It may be an appropriate period of time to establish all of the ways to address those targets, to reduce them. It might make sense that it will take some significant time, but to set the targets, that seems like a long time.

[1540]

As we know, the government didn't have a problem setting the 2020 target of 33 percent without knowing how it was going to get there. It is figuring that out now, which is fine, and presumably will do the same thing on these targets.

So my question is: how come more than a year to set those targets, when it doesn't say set them and necessarily put a plan forward?

Hon. B. Penner: As we acknowledged last week when we established the climate action team... I should pause here to note that I'm very pleased at the calibre of people who have stepped forward to volunteer their services for that purpose. The climate action team has until the end of July to bring forward their recommendations in terms of the interim targets as well as additional action steps that they believe the government should consider. That takes us into August.

We are planning to allow public input on those recommendations and to follow the normal Ministry of Environment public consultation process that is used for other Ministry of Environment initiatives. In order to allow time for public feedback on that, that brings us into the month of September and possibly even October.

Then we'll want to take a look at where we go from that in terms of the public input and the ideas that get brought forward. We may be in a position to move as quickly as November 2008 to set the specific requirements, but this gives us a bit of extra leeway into the month of December, if that should be required.

S. Simpson: I'm going to follow up on that because the minister made an interesting comment. He talked about public feedback or public comment, and that's a good thing. I'm glad to hear the minister talking about

that. We know that there certainly was no public feedback or public comment around the 33 percent by 2020. We know that a number of people, including, I think, a number of the minister's colleagues and — who knows? — maybe the minister himself, were surprised by that number when it was established.

But we're now talking about public input into 2012 and 2016, and I'm supportive of that. Maybe the minister could tell us: what kind of public feedback or public comment and engagement does the minister envision between now and December 31 in this discussion around the 2012-2016 targets?

Hon. B. Penner: As I already indicated in my previous answer, we would anticipate putting out the recommendations for public comment as we do with other public comment processes through the Ministry of Environment. As the member may or may not know, that's a 45-day public comment period. People will be invited to provide their feedback.

S. Simpson: I'm not sure that this particular public comment process is necessarily statutory in the way that, say, environmental assessment processes are, unless the minister is going to find a way that we haven't seen yet to tie this into the environment assessment process.

Maybe then, since we've talked a lot about the climate action team and the work they will do, and the minister has talked a lot about that team.... What kind of public process does the minister envision the climate action team going through between now and the end of July as it does its work to formulate its recommendations for government?

Hon. B. Penner: The first meeting for the climate action team, I believe, has now been set for sometime in early December. I will leave it up to the climate action team to decide how they want to conduct themselves. I know they have a number of meetings they'll be engaged in.

[1545]

They have a tall order to address. It's a challenging job they've volunteered for. I'm very pleased at the calibre of people who have stepped forward to help British Columbians and people outside of our borders, too, to show the kind of leadership that is possible by setting your mind to a target such as the one we've set.

S. Simpson: Maybe a quick bit of a two-part question here so that we can deal with both pieces. The first is.... The minister has just said that he would leave it up to the climate action team to decide. So am I to assume from that, then, that it will be up to the team to decide how public its process will be and whether, in fact, its meetings will be open or closed or some combination of the two?

I'll just ask the second part of that question. It relates to the comment of the minister around the 45 days. As the minister will know, sometimes those processes involve public meetings and public hearings, and sometimes they involve written submissions. Is it the

expectation of the minister that there will be a series of public meetings where the public can come and talk about those targets, or is it the expectation of the minister that it will be written submissions only?

Hon. B. Penner: In establishing the climate action team, we've deliberately not put many constraints on how they go about conducting their business. We did, as I mentioned, give them three specific jobs, which they're expected to complete by the end of July 2008. These are making recommendations for 2012 and 2016 targets, identifying further actions for the short- and medium-term to reduce emissions and meet the 2020 targets, as well as providing advice on meeting the provincial government's commitment to become carbon-neutral by 2010. Those are three specific jobs they've been given to do.

Aside from that, we have not been particularly prescriptive about how they go about that task. In terms of the 45-day public comment period, as I indicated, we expect that that report will be put out for public comment following the usual Ministry of Environment public consultation process, which includes 45 days.

S. Simpson: To maybe just get a little clarification on the answers, does that mean that it will be exclusively up to the climate action team to decide what kind of public process and how transparent their process will be to the public?

[1550]

It will be their choice to make that without any guidance or direction from the government. If they want to be totally open and have public meetings, if they want some combination of public and private sessions that that will be their call as a committee, as an action team, as to what they do? If they want to release the information that they produce, they can do that? Or will they be restricted by government and by the direction of the cabinet committee?

The second thing is the 45 days. I understand the 45 days. Will those 45 days include public meetings, or will there only be written submissions?

Hon. B. Penner: As I've said, we've tried to be very non-prescriptive in terms of how the climate action team goes about its work. It will be up to the climate action team to decide exactly how they want to go about their tasks of assisting us with the 2012 and 2016 targets, identifying additional action items to get us to our 33-percent reduction target in 2020 as well as advising us on our carbon-neutrality objective for the provincial government for 2010.

We're letting them set their own course in terms of how they get to those objectives. In terms of the member's question, again, we will be following the standard Ministry of Environment process when we're consulting on initiatives that the Ministry of Environment has undertaken.

S. Simpson: Will the environment process...? As I've said before, it is different things at different times. Will there be public meetings in those 45 days — yes or no?

Hon. B. Penner: I just realized why the member is asking the question again. He's obviously not aware of what the standard Ministry of Environment public consultation process is.

It calls for web-based feedback. We'll post something equivalent to an intentions paper on the Ministry of Environment website, which is the usual public consultation or feedback process that the Ministry of Environment uses. Members of the public and interested parties will have 45 days to provide input or feedback. Then the ministry will take time to review the feedback and will provide a summary and advice to government following that.

S. Simpson: Well, that's unbelievable. The government is saying: "No public meetings" — again, no possibility for the public to be engaged in this process. It is remarkable.

The secrecy around this is incredible. I suspect it's the way it is because if the people in those meetings answer questions with the depth of knowledge that the minister is answering questions today, the frustration levels will go through the roof with the public. I understand that now.

We're going to have no public meetings, and I would note that in the vague answer that the minister gave around the committee, he didn't answer the question around whether, in fact, there will be any direction to the committee. So we'll try that one, one more time, since we now know that the ministry and the minister will not have public meetings and don't want to talk to the people of British Columbia about climate change.

The question then is around the climate action team. If they choose to hold public meetings, if they choose to hold their sessions in public, if they choose to release the information they produce on their own timetable, can they do that — yes or no?

Hon. B. Penner: Just to reiterate, the climate action team, as we announced last week, will be making the report public after they've completed their work. They will get to set their own course, as I've indicated.

Usually I would expect the opposition to be upset if we were fettering an advisory body of this nature, but the Premier has already made commitments around holding public forums. In fact, one's already been held around the topic of climate change — in Kamloops, just a few weeks ago, for the agricultural sector.

[1555]

I would anticipate additional public forums being held relating to a variety of topics, including mining, forestry, energy and waste. Those meetings will be taking place over the next year. In addition, the legislative committee on Finance received many submissions as we were preparing the budget, and many people who did present submissions to the Standing Committee on Finance of the Legislature made comments regarding climate change initiatives or policies, whether it be on the tax side or the spending side — what additional actions could be done.

There is lots of opportunity for public feedback and input. I'm getting it through my e-mail inbox on a regular basis. People have taken advantage of the public hearings that the legislative committee on Finance has undertaken. The Ministry of Finance, I know, was reviewing the report that was tabled here in this Legislature just a week ago.

The Premier has also committed to a number of sectoral forums. One has already been held in Kamloops. I understand it was very well attended, with a number of very interesting ideas that were brought forward about how we can capture CO₂ or methane gases, which contribute to climate change, while actually providing additional economic opportunities for the agricultural sector.

That underscores all of our objectives as a government when it comes to dealing with climate change. We know that it is a daunting task, and it is going to be challenging to get to our targets, but we never want to lose sight of what the economic opportunities are. We believe that the economic opportunities are significant. So these sectoral forums will be held around the province, looking for people's concerns and ideas as we work to reduce emissions across various sectors in British Columbia.

S. Simpson: It's pretty remarkable that the minister is saying that we are going to adopt the same process to engage the people of British Columbia in, arguably, the biggest single issue that will be dealt with in this place in the next, maybe, decades — the question of climate change. We're going to use the same process there — 45 days — as we would use on a localized environmental question that went before environmental assessment.

It seems the minister has no sense of scope or scale. He has no sense that this is a provincewide initiative. It's not a local initiative. Instead, what the minister is telling us is: "If you want to consult, send me an e-mail, or check the website." That's not the way that consultation and engagement work.

We certainly know that the people of British Columbia that are talking to us — many of them quite supportive of the broader picture that is being put forward — are anxious because nobody is talking to them. They don't know what it means. They don't know what the expectations are. They don't know how this is going to work. They're not part of the discussion. What we're hearing today is that there is nothing in this bill that lets them be any more part of the discussion than they have been, other than somewhere, six or eight months from now, being able to consult a website.

The minister talks about these sectoral meetings. Well, the last time that I checked those meetings, there wasn't an open invitation for the public to go to those meetings. They were industry-sectoral meetings or other sectoral meetings where they were by invitation. Fair enough. I don't have a problem with those happening. But it is disingenuous for the minister to suggest that those in any way are a public consultation with the people of British Columbia. They're not.

Having said that, hon. Chair, I'm going to propose and move another amendment.

[Section 2 (1):

By adding the following subsection:

(c) by 2008 and for each subsequent calendar year, BC greenhouse gas emissions will be capped at the level of those emissions in 2007.]

[1600]

On the amendment.

S. Simpson: I've moved this amendment, and this reflects work that we in the opposition did earlier this year. What we had said earlier this year is that there is a need for action. What we know is that British Columbians want action on climate change.

We know — as the minister has said, as we've heard from the Premier and as we've seen from the time line that is put forward in this bill — that a number of things are going to take some significant time to put in place. We understand that, and we understand that those challenges will need to be put in place.

What we've done here is said: "Okay, our ability to reduce emissions in the short term may be somewhat limited because, in fact, it's going to take time to put plans in place — at least a year or so that we know of." So what we've suggested — and this was in propositions that we made last year — is that we make the decision to cap at 2007 levels. We can look at how that works, whether it's a reduction of emissions in areas, credits or offsets — a combination of things.

What it is saying, though, is that our commitment is immediate — now — to deal with the question of emissions; that we will halt the increase in emissions now; and that then we will work to begin the reductions over time, as they are laid out in the bill and in what we can expect in the subsequent work of the government.

It is our belief that if we're serious about that, if we're going to be action-oriented, if we're going to do what the people of British Columbia want — they want action now — let's cap now at 2007 levels, as we see those arise in the next year and know what they are, and then begin to take levels down from there. That would be action. That would be immediate. That would be dealing with what British Columbians want to see now. We think that this amendment brings immediate action to what is otherwise something that puts us far out past the next election and into the future.

If we were to cap at the 2007 levels and to make that commitment in the next year, the government could demonstrate real action on climate change between now and May of 2009. The people of British Columbia then could make a determination, based on the success of this government to accomplish that cap — not a reduction, the cap — and decide whether in fact they had confidence that the government had what it takes to make these reductions work.

If the government is up to that challenge, I would encourage them to support us on this amendment. Take action now. Put it in place. Let's move forward.

Hon. B. Penner: Hon. Chair, the member may forget what some of the reaction was when the NDP

talked about putting caps in place for a year for which they don't yet know what the emission levels are. That was their so-called plan, which they put out in February.

You'll remember that just two weeks before that, their leader had said it would take them two years before they were in a position to put forward any kind of ideas around climate change, to put forward a plan. When that didn't receive very good response from the media and stakeholders, they cobbled together six points on a piece of paper, called it a plan and rushed it out the door. In doing so, they said that they would freeze emissions in British Columbia at 2007 levels, even though they didn't know what they were yet.

The member is kind of arguing against this amendment when he says it will take some time, as he says it, "to put measures in place." He's absolutely right. It does take time, not just to put measures in place but for them to begin to bite and to have an effect. I would argue that those kinds of policy measures are what are required.

I've already listed off a number of the things that we've committed to. I didn't get to a requirement for a 30-percent reduction in tailpipe emissions by adopting California tailpipe standards. The policy commitment that we've made will be reflected in the legislation that we bring forward in the next session, but it's not in place today. It's not in place today to help us with capping emissions at 2007 levels.

The only way you would be capping emissions with any certainty at 2007 levels is if you told every single person who was planning to move to British Columbia, "You cannot," and told anyone who wanted to open a new facility today in British Columbia: "You cannot." You couldn't have any incremental growth in the economy at all. In other words, they'd be calling for a complete freeze on economic activity in British Columbia if they were going to try and stop emissions at today's level. They don't have that information with them today.

[1605]

Let me just refer to one person, Guy Dauncey from the B.C. Sustainable Energy Association. Here's what Mr. Dauncey had to say: "You can't put an immediate cap on emissions, because every car is producing emissions, and you can't legislate an immediate cap. It just can't be done, because people are moving to B.C., our population is growing, and we're buying new appliances. You've got to phase this stuff. It's meaningless to put an immediate cap on it, because you'd break it within a day."

That's what Guy Dauncey, the president of the B.C. Sustainable Energy Association, said on February 13, 2007, in response to the NDP's suggestions. His further comments about the NDP's so-called plan were, "The NDP has made such a very weak showing of climate change that there are no competitors in the field. They could have. They could do whatever they want at the moment — this government — because the NDP has not stepped up to the plate with anything remotely near this" — referring to what we've committed to in the Speech from the Throne.

It might sound good — what the NDP is proposing — but they clearly haven't thought through the implications. I don't know how they would stop people from moving to British Columbia. They don't know what the emissions are today. In fact, we won't know what today's emission levels are, for 2007, for probably about 18 months. So I have no idea exactly how they would work to accomplish this objective they're proposing to put into law, and I would submit to you that they have no idea either, because we haven't heard any policies articulated from them that would get us to this objective.

We have been doing a lot of work over the last year to identify additional policy actions — not just setting a legal cap but policy actions — to support that, but all economists, all environmentalists, all scientists acknowledge that it's going to take time for new policy actions put in place today to start to bite to get the outcomes that you're looking for. That's why we have set a 33-percent reduction by 2020. It gives us 13 years from today to get those measures into place and to start to drive down the emissions, and we're going to be working to set interim targets for 2012 and 2016.

Don't just take it from me. Take it from somebody like Guy Dauncey, the president of the B.C. Sustainable Energy Association, who says, "You can't put an immediate cap on emissions," and then goes on to give the explanation why.

G. Robertson: I just want to stand up strongly in favour of this amendment as moved. We don't have 13 years to wait around. We don't have the luxury of years and years to do further measurements and take our time to eventually legislate, regulate or set policy. These actions need to take place now.

The urgency around climate change has been met by many other countries, many other jurisdictions around the world. The minister might remember something called the Kyoto protocol. Again, 2008 to 2012 is the period in question there. This government is refusing to do anything significant in terms of action before 2012, and even then, the targets fall well short of anything envisioned within the Kyoto protocol.

I don't understand why there isn't a significant commitment to take action now. Of course it's going to take time to measure the emissions from 2007. Of course the actual assessment of where we are on an emissions cap is going to take a little bit of time. That doesn't preclude the government from legislating a cap for 2007, which then forces this government to take action on regulation, on policy. You don't have to wait for legislation that you might move in the spring.

As we've seen so far, the pace this government introduces legislation at is very sluggish. It has taken you six and a half years to bring this legislation forward for targets, while other countries and other jurisdictions have been making good progress on this — a long, long time.

We can't wait. My kids can't wait. You need to take action on this now. Let's legislate a cap on our emissions. Let's walk our talk here in B.C. Let's get it together.

Let's have something. Let's make a statement on this, people.

If you really care about climate change, why not make a definitive statement and cap the emissions this year? Why are you talking 2020, 2050? A lot of us won't be alive in 2050. Let's do something here. We're alive today. Let's cap the emissions now and take the actions necessary to address climate change.

Hon. B. Penner: I note that the member who just spoke made no attempt to refute or rebut what somebody like Guy Dauncey had to say about the NDP's idea around a cap and his comment. "It just can't be done, because people are moving to B.C., our population is growing, and we're buying new appliances. You've got to phase this stuff. It's meaningless to put an immediate cap on it, because you'd break it within a day."

[1610]

The member says: "Well, we'll send a signal." Well, we've already done that with this legislation. The person who said that we'd be sending the signal is the member for Vancouver-Hastings, the Environment critic. If we were to bring into legislation the 33-percent reduction target by 2020, he said: "I think the government could deliver a very strong message by in fact legislating that 33-percent reduction. That would deliver a very clear message about how serious this government is." His words, not mine. Your opposition critic's words, not mine.

By your own standards, the legislation we're debating here today sends a very strong message to all people in British Columbia that we're serious about our reduction targets. We, however, want them to be doable. They must be accomplished, and so we have implemented a whole range of policies, unlike the previous government, which allowed greenhouse gas emissions to increase by 24 percent, built the largest single natural gas-fired plant, or IPP, in British Columbia on Vancouver Island — a 240-megawatt gas plant.

It didn't build enough renewable sources of electricity, so today we're a net importer. Even today the Environment critic says it's preferable to import cheap coal power than to spend more on renewables in British Columbia in order to keep our lights on. That's an interesting comment — for an Environment critic to suggest that we shouldn't pay more for clean sources but should take advantage of cheaper power on the spot market. Even if it's coming from Montana or Alberta, we should buy it anyway and not consider the social or externality cost associated with that dirty, coal-fired power from Montana or Alberta.

We have a very different vision. We have upped B.C. Hydro's requirements to 90 percent clean electricity on a go-forward basis, not 10 percent as it was under the NDP — a measly, paltry 10 percent. Instead of building a 240-megawatt gas-fired plant on Vancouver Island, we're building clean, renewable energy. We're actually approving five wind farms in British Columbia, something the NDP never did — not once. They didn't ever think to do that.

We do have a different range of policies, and I can rattle off a few more of them. I've already mentioned an end to routine flaring in the oil and gas sector, a requirement for carbon sequestration if you want to build coal-fired electricity.

I know the opposition has got a different approach. They're against investment in the IPP sector. They're also against innovation. Their approach — and I heard his leader say it even just last week here in the House — is just no to coal. It wasn't no to the CO₂ emissions from coal. It was no to coal in B.C., instead of saying: "You can use coal if you can put your ingenuity, creativity and, frankly, your dollars behind a new technology that can deal with what the concerns are about coal." A very different approach.

We would like to challenge people to use their minds, to use their resources to find solutions. Instead of just saying, "No, we're not going to allow innovation in British Columbia. We're not going to give you the opportunity to pursue that," we are challenging all people in British Columbia — whether it be the private sector, industry, academia or even government and individuals — to do things differently.

To bring this back down to something we can all relate to, I know the member for Vancouver-Fairview travels frequently by helijet between Vancouver and Victoria to get here. I see him stepping off the helijet. That helijet burns fossil fuel.

In order to put an immediate cap on today, we'd have to know exactly how many trips he's making in 2007 and not allow that individual, him, to make a single additional trip in 2008 if we're going to have some certainty that the emissions are not going to increase when he gets on that fossil fuel-burning helicopter and flies back and forth between Vancouver and Victoria. That's very challenging to do. That's one choice.

Guy Dauncey, the president of the Sustainable Energy Association, says that that's not the right way to go and that the NDP's plan is flawed. I think Mr. Dauncey is correct. Our approach is to set targets for 2020, which the NDP has already said would be aggressive and bold.

In fact, the opposition member, the Environment critic, said: "It is very aggressive." Later on in the same interview he said: "If that's achieved, it will be great." Finally, he said — this was on CBC radio: "I think everybody needs to be happy that the government has recognized the importance of targets." That's exactly what this legislation does. It allows us to set interim targets for 2012 and 2016.

[1615]

You may want to posture and grandstand in a way that doesn't give actual results. That will not help the climate. It will not help the climate merely to put forward yet another political document. Instead, we're trying to get on with real actions and policy objectives, and we're implementing those on this side of the House.

The Chair: I'll call the question on the proposed amendment to Bill 44, to amend it as follows: "Section 2 (1): By adding the following subsection: (c) by 2008 and for each subsequent calendar year, BC greenhouse gas

emissions will be capped at the level of those emissions in 2007."

[1620]

Amendment negatived on the following division:

YEAS — 29

Brar	Fleming	Farnworth
James	Kwan	Ralston
Cubberley	Hammell	Coons
Thorne	Simons	Gentner
Routley	Fraser	Horgan
Dix	Trevena	Bains
Robertson	Karagianis	Evans
Krog	Austin	Chudnovsky
Chouhan	Wyse	Sather
Macdonald		Conroy

NAYS — 38

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

Section 2 approved.

On section 3.

G. Robertson: In section 3 there's a reference to "reasonably practicable" as the nearest possible time for the determination of 2007 baseline levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Can the minister clarify what "as soon as reasonably practicable" means in terms of dates?

[1625]

Hon. B. Penner: As I noted during debate on the opposition's last proposed amendment, we won't know for some time what the 2007 greenhouse gas emission levels actually are in British Columbia. The phrase "As soon as reasonably practicable" is used because these levels will take some time to calculate using information from outside sources, primarily federal government reports issued in accordance with the United Nations framework convention on climate change.

The 2007 level for the province cannot be calculated until Canada completes its UNFCCC report for this year. That's what that section refers to.

G. Robertson: Can the minister give the people of B.C. a rough estimate of when he expects we will have that data and when we'll know what the baseline is for 2007?

Hon. B. Penner: Perhaps the member wasn't listening when I was addressing the amendment that we were just debating. As I indicated, we won't know for some time what the 2007 levels are for British Columbia. It takes StatsCan and Environment Canada time to tabulate those numbers and put them together.

For example, in May of this year StatsCan and Environment Canada released the information for 2005. That should give the member some indication.

G. Robertson: I'm extrapolating this in my head, because the minister won't go there. Since 2005 just came in, we're looking at least at two more years before we have 2007 established.

It would be helpful, I think, for everyone to have some idea, some ballpark of what we're looking at — whether it's perhaps in the context of the next provincial election. Will it be before that happens?

Hon. B. Penner: The exact month that StatsCan puts out that information varies. I believe the member at least purports to follow greenhouse gas issues closely. I don't know if that's true, but if he does, he will know that Environment Canada and StatsCan put out those figures sometime in the spring, usually more than one year after the end of the calendar year.

I'm told by StatsCan and Environment Canada people that they do that so they have time to verify the numbers before they're released. Different verification processes or audits are done on those statistics so that they can have some reliance on them.

That is one reason, however, why we have joined something called the climate registry in the United States. We have an interest in obtaining more timely data and information so that we can know sooner and with greater certainty what the actual emissions are in British Columbia. The agreement with the climate registry is to make sure that we're adopting the best possible methodologies and standards for obtaining greenhouse gas emission information and statistics, because it is a frustration to wait for the federal numbers to be released every year.

J. Horgan: I'm curious. Perhaps the minister, if he's not prepared to wait for Canadian data, can tell me how this registry in the United States is going to be providing data on B.C.'s figures. Are they collecting data now on B.C. emissions?

[1630]

Hon. B. Penner: The climate registry is an initiative that is working to support the western climate initiative. The western climate initiative, if you've read those agreements,

relies on the climate registry to provide a common framework or baseline of greenhouse gas emissions so that we're comparing apples to apples.

Different jurisdictions have used different methodologies for collecting greenhouse gas emission information. So the U.S. has had a different approach than Canada, or at least some jurisdictions within the U.S. have had different numbers.

The drive behind the climate registry is to make sure we're getting consistency. That's important for the western climate initiative so that the member jurisdictions know they're comparing apples to apples amongst each other.

Also, British Columbia is very interested in making sure that information is available as soon as possible. One of the differences between the StatsCan approach versus the climate registry is that StatsCan typically looks to gather information that is site specific — to particular industrial facilities, for example — whereas the climate registry looks at an entity, an organization, and the whole range of different industrial plants or facilities that particular entity or company would be operating.

They do come at it in a different way. I think, ultimately, that will serve British Columbians well, because we'll have different cuts at the information — the StatsCan approach as well as the climate registry approach. Under the agreement that was signed, I believe the work on that starts in January 2008.

J. Horgan: So the minister is saying that the climate registry, which is part and parcel of the western climate initiative.... I understand that its primary focus — based on the briefing that I had — was establishing a marketplace for trading — cap-and-trade emissions and so on. If I heard the minister correctly, the climate registry is going to begin collecting data in 2008, and they're going to be collecting on the entire entity. Can the minister explain what that entity is? Is it all industrial activity? Does it include industrial activity and transportation? Is the electricity sector involved in that?

How is an American organization going to collect that data? Is it voluntary for sectors to participate, or is the government going to force industrial activity to participate in this registry?

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

Hon. B. Penner: Just to go back to elaborate a bit further, there are five working groups with the western climate initiative. One of them is working on the scope that will be applied by the climate registry in terms of just exactly what the thresholds are for the reporting that flows into the climate registry for emissions by entity. That work is ongoing. B.C. has some people at the table there, and that's part of five working groups with the western climate initiative.

[1635]

I should also state a clarification. I referred a couple times to Environment Canada providing information to StatsCan. It's actually NRCan, Natural Resources Canada, that gathers the data across the country. Then

somehow it gets verified — I guess by Statistics Canada. They have the expert mathematicians or statisticians for crunching the numbers. So it's Natural Resources Canada that provides the data into StatsCan.

I am advised that, compared to some jurisdictions, the data that we collect in Canada through that particular process is actually pretty good. But as I've said earlier, we think that it would be nice to have it a bit quicker, if that could happen without undermining the integrity or accuracy of that data.

I understand, as I've pushed officials to see if we can't get the information quicker, that they don't want to see a trade-off happen at the federal level where the data is less reliable because it's done more quickly. Still, I would hope that there's some opportunity to turn that around quicker. In the meantime we will be using the best available information that we have for our reporting and will continue to work with our partners on the climate registry.

J. Horgan: I thank the minister for that, but it hasn't cleared it up in my mind. When the minister talks about the WCI and one of the five tables being the scope, I'm still not clear. My last question was: how are emitters in British Columbia responsible to this entity? Who will compel them to provide data? Are they going to be compelled to provide data? Or is the data going to come from some other body like Natural Resources Canada, Stats Canada, B.C. Stats?

I'm not clear on why a foreign body like the climate registry would be more valuable to us if they're going to begin their work in 2008, if we already have this work being done on an annual basis with reporting out 18 months or 16 months after the end of the calendar year. Why would we want to duplicate that work?

Hon. B. Penner: I am advised — again, by officials who are trying to put this in layman's terms.... The StatsCan, NRCan and, to some extent, Environment Canada approach — apparently all three entities are involved to some extent in gathering this information — is more like a top-down approach in terms of gathering the greenhouse gas emissions data across the country, whereas the climate registry concept is more of a bottom-up approach, gathering up individual entities and adding up the numbers as you go.

Ultimately, I think the objective should be to have a North American-wide standard for the collection of data so that we have a common set of data or information. To that extent, we're encouraged that already there are, I think, 46 different jurisdictions — states, provinces and tribes — who have signed on to the climate registry.

As an idea it originated within California, but very quickly other states asked if they could share the same software or mainframe basis for going forward. California, frankly, had spent a lot of money already in designing their software system for tabulating the data.

[1640]

Within Canada, British Columbia, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan are the provinces that have now

signed on to the climate registry. Being a part of the climate registry is a precondition or a fundamental requirement of being a member of the western climate initiative. So you can't get to be a member of the western climate initiative unless you've already said you'll take part in the climate registry, for the reasons I've already discussed.

J. Horgan: I thank the minister for that answer, but it's still not helping me. If our objective is to find solid numbers, a firm baseline, as is outlined here in section 3, then how do we get that unless we in British Columbia are canvassing those emitters that we're aware of so that we can get hard data? If we're just modelling, if we're just forecasting using the StatsCan numbers or the Natural Resources Canada numbers, then we can do modelling right now and project what that might be and put a cap in that's hard and firm and knowable at year's end.

If we're looking for hard data on total tonnage, then wouldn't we have to require emitters to give us that information? And if that's the case, are they giving it to us, or are they giving it to the climate registry, or are we just the conduit? The ministry will collect the data from emitters, Transportation will extrapolate cars, volumes of traffic, and then we'll pass that information on to both levels — to our senior level of government as well as this North American registry. Is that the plan?

Hon. B. Penner: I take the member's point that we don't want to duplicate the efforts of industry in terms of the information that they already provide. I think that was the point that he was making. We've said all along that our intention is to have a single point of reporting for industry. Currently the information that they provide is mandatory and goes to the federal government.

There are three agencies involved. At times I may only refer to one, but for the record — almost as if I was writing a definition section — if I say NRCan, I also mean to include StatsCan and Environment Canada. And vice versa — if I say Environment Canada, that could also mean NRCan and StatsCan, because all three of those federal agencies have a role to play currently.

As we work forward with the western climate initiative, my objective will be to make sure that the information that's provided by industry is suitable to meet the federal requirements as well as the climate registry requirements so that industry doesn't have to report twice.

[1645]

Our goal is to have a single point of reporting, a single contact, so that we avoid the problem that the member has correctly identified of unnecessary duplication of effort. But currently the reporting takes place at the federal level, and it is mandatory for those entities.

J. Horgan: I thank the minister for that because my concern was that we seem to be having a multiplicity of opportunities for people to give data, and we want to

reduce that as much as possible. I know that if the "minister for red tape" was here, he would certainly want to see just one window to intake this information and then get it to the sources that are required.

Again, I go back to.... If we are waiting to fulfil "as soon as reasonably practicable," as outlined in section 3, in essence, we're going to be waiting until after the next provincial election before the people of British Columbia can have some sense of what the baseline is for 2007 and, therefore, the magnitude of the reductions that will be required to meet the targets for 2020 and 2050. Is that correct?

Hon. B. Penner: At this point we don't know for sure because the federal agencies — the three that I've referred to — are the ones that are gathering the data. So we're in their hands as to when they turn that around and release it.

As I've indicated already, the most current data is for the 2005 calendar year. That was released, I believe, in late April or early May of 2007.

Just for the record, it indicated that between 2004 and 2005, B.C.'s total greenhouse gas emissions actually declined by 2.4 percent compared to the previous year, which was encouraging considering that that was also a period of significant economic growth in British Columbia, where we saw significant employment gains — more people working and, in fact, more people living here in British Columbia.

It's too soon to say if that's a trend. That was the year-over-year result. Obviously, we all share a common interest, I think, in making sure that that one-year report becomes a trend, but I think it's too soon to say that it will be. That's why we are embarked on a whole range of initiatives, which I have discussed previously in this debate, to further curb greenhouse gas emissions in British Columbia.

J. Horgan: Well, then my last question to the minister on this section would be this. If adaptation is the single most important consideration for government and for the people of British Columbia if we're going to meet the targets set out in this bill, why not use 2006 as a baseline so we can get at it, so we can get started?

I appreciate the minister is going to say that we're already working on it. That's fine, but in terms of the fudge factor for those in industry who are resistant to meeting the objectives of this bill and the objectives that are shared by both sides of the House, why not take a year that we can get a hard baseline sooner so that we can move more quickly, in the spring and in the fall of next year, rather than waiting for an election period where all of us — those who are running and those who are not — will be preoccupied with other activities?

Why not accelerate by moving back 2007 to 2006, so that we can get the data in the spring of 2008 rather than the spring of 2009?

[1650]

Hon. B. Penner: The short answer to the member's question is that the 2006 data will be made public. That

will be made public whenever Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada and Statistics Canada release their synthesized report on the emissions inventory data from across the country.

J. Horgan: So why not use that as the baseline, the 2006 data, so that we can get going?

Hon. B. Penner: This is, kind of, the debate we had around section 2. Maybe the member missed that, but we spent the first hour or so of the debate on the details of the bill on just that particular question about the setting of the base year in 2007. I articulated a number of reasons why the government has adopted 2007 for the base year. The member will be interested to know that it's also the same base year that his party has started from in terms of dealing with greenhouse gas emissions in British Columbia — 2007.

G. Robertson: I think the member for Malahat-Juan de Fuca raises a fair point, and the minister is being evasive in answering it. The rationale for choosing 2007 seemed to be the rigour of the statistics, the measurements that are possible now versus 1990. I think it's a fair question in terms of expediting the actions necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions — that we could look at 2006 as the base year. That data will be forthcoming a whole year ahead of time. If there is an urgency to the actions, can the minister clearly articulate why 2006 is not more appropriate than 2007 as a base year?

Hon. B. Penner: The Speech from the Throne, which took place in February 2007, clearly articulated that we were starting with 2007 as our base year for a 33-percent reduction target by 2020 and that we would be working to set interim targets as well as a longer-term goal.

[1655]

The legislation that we're debating before the House does exactly what we said we would do in the throne speech. We had to make a decision about picking a year. We chose 2007 on a go-forward basis. This is where we're starting. What is probably even more important are the specific actions to help us achieve the goals that we've set in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

The member has heard me mention a number of them, but I'll add a few others. In this session we've already introduced and passed legislation to establish a new \$25 million innovative clean energy fund. Now, I know the NDP's Energy critic spoke against it at the time, but then the party ended up voting in favour, and I welcomed their support.

It's important that we put in place a form of revenue generation to help pay for new technologies, especially clean technologies, that will be put to work to help solve some of the challenges we have right here in British Columbia.

That fund is paid for by a surcharge on energy consumption. Call it a carbon tax if you want. It's very

clearly targeted at energy consumption. The message is clear: if you want to avoid having to pay that surcharge on your energy bill, turn down the thermostat a notch and you'll more than do that. For every one degree reduction in your thermostat, you can save yourself 2 percent annually on your energy bill, whereas the surcharge here that we're talking about for the ICE fund was a fraction of 1 percent. You can clearly save yourself the money if you're concerned about that.

That could be portrayed as the beginning of a form of carbon tax in that it's something people can avoid paying if they change their behaviour. It's something we want to encourage people to do.

We've announced goals to use renewable energy from the forest sector, particularly pine beetle-killed wood. We think there are big opportunities there. We don't underestimate the challenge that many of our rural communities are facing with the absolute onslaught of the pine beetle. That's a completely relevant thing to talk about here because, frankly, I think it's a manifestation of climate change here in British Columbia where we don't get the kind of lengthy cold winters that we used to, to help keep that bug in check.

As a result, it's predicted that up to 78 percent of our pine forest is going to succumb to the pine beetle. There's no way around it. No one can say with any plausibility that communities won't be affected by that. So we're trying to mitigate the damage. One way is to pull some revenue and some value out of those dying and decaying trees and use them to create renewable energy.

We are working on legislation to give us greater authority to regulate methane that escapes from landfills in British Columbia. I think the member can look forward to seeing some new legislative initiatives from this government in the next session when we sit in the new year.

We are working on a cap-and-trade system. We've already signed an agreement to that effect. That will send a very clear message to industry that there's a price associated with carbon emissions. You better take that into account in your business planning.

Currently, for the most part, there hasn't been a direct cost to industry for greenhouse gas emissions, or to anyone else for that matter, so it was treated as a free good. We all know from basic economics that if something's considered free, people will probably use a lot more of it.

So what we've had is that the atmosphere has been treated like the commons, as a free receptacle for CO₂ emissions. A cap-and-trade system will put a price on that carbon for the industry that's caught by the regulation.

We are working with other jurisdictions in the Pacific Northwest to electrify truck stops and support anti-idling measures for heavy vehicles. We're funding the acquisition of North America's biggest fuel cell bus fleet — again, because those vehicles are so beneficial from an emissions perspective.

We're expanding cycling networks and working on a whole range of transportation initiatives — some of

which you'll hear about shortly — which will go a significant way to reducing emissions.

The member will also be somewhat familiar, I think, with the \$1.9 billion Canada line. I think he's probably had a chance to go view the construction at least once. That will have the benefit of removing up to 14,000 tonnes annually of GHGs when it's up and running. I look forward to the day that it is up and running.

Section 3 approved.

On section 4.

G. Robertson: On section 4, progress reports on reducing B.C. greenhouse gas emissions are outlined here. Section 4 articulates that every even-numbered calendar year is when these reports will be issued. Can the minister give a good rationale as to why these are not issued annually?

[1700]

Hon. B. Penner: The requirements in section 4 align with the requirements set out in the western climate initiative and are consistent with what the other partners we have in that initiative are committing to.

The next question the member may ask is: why did the western climate initiative land on a reporting requirement of every two years for government as a whole? That is because of the amount of work that's involved. The members around the table in the formation of the western climate initiative recognized that it takes a tremendous amount of effort to tabulate the data and to put out reports, so they want to make sure that people are focused on actions and that there is benchmarking done at appropriate intervals. But they want to make sure that the majority of the efforts actually focused on action items and getting those deliverables in place.

G. Robertson: It is a little peculiar that this government is taking its directives from partners in the western climate initiative. There may be some practicalities and, obviously, cost savings involved in not counting emissions every year. But I think there is an equally, if not more, compelling case for ensuring that we are all over this and tracking it every year and that it's a made-in-B.C. initiative versus one that is being driven primarily by states south of the border that may have a different rationale for cost-cutting and limiting government's role in monitoring greenhouse gas emissions.

I would just assert here that if we're serious about tracking emissions and paying attention to it, we do that regardless of the western climate initiative, and in its formative stages at this point.... If we are moving forward, as this government has said, with greenhouse gas targets that are all about B.C. taking leadership, we should be able to be tracking those and showing leadership on tracking those every calendar year. So it's very peculiar to me that we're defaulting to every other year.

In addition, I'm perplexed by this section stating that the minister is who makes the report public, versus an independent body. Is there a rationale for the Minister of Environment being wholly responsible for the public reports around greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. B. Penner: Just to address the last question first, the Ministry of Environment has lead responsibility in government for the greenhouse gas reduction issue. It's a policy area that we have responsibility for. So the legislation contemplates that the minister, whoever is sitting in this chair, will report on that progress every two years.

The minister already has to table annual service plans and annual service plan reports. I also have produced reports on behalf of a variety of agencies that the Ministry of Environment is responsible for, including the environmental assessment office and the Environmental Appeal Board, and I'm sure there are some others.

[1705]

It's a traditional approach in a parliamentary system that the minister responsible produces reports, and that's what the legislation contemplates.

Just to correct an apprehension that the member may have about the timing of the reports, or the frequency thereof, there will be no decrease in frequency of reporting on B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions. As I indicated at some length in discussing this with the opposition Energy critic a few moments ago, that data is currently collected by accommodation of Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada and Statistics Canada. It gets rolled up into an annual inventory and then gets released.

That work will be ongoing, and Statistics Canada, Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada, I presume, will continue to do that work for Canada and will continue to make those reports available on an annual basis.

G. Robertson: Then, if this emissions reporting is taking place anyway and the federal government is proceeding along those lines, what is the cost? What is the challenge with the B.C. government being responsible for annual reporting on greenhouse gas emissions and progress towards the targets?

Hon. B. Penner: The discussion that took place within the WCI.... I understand that there was essentially consensus on this issue about the timing of these particular reports referred to in section 4 and not to be confused with the reports done by StatsCan — that trends in terms of fuel consumption and other things take place over a period longer than one year. So there was discussion around what would be the appropriate length of time. Would it be five years, four years, three years, two? By consensus the various parties landed at two years.

Again, I don't want to have our staff spending more time just writing reports for the sake of writing reports, but it was felt that after a two-year period, it would be

worthwhile to take stock of what emission levels were at after a certain number of policy decisions and actions had already been implemented.

If the member reads the other subsections here, the report is not just about the greenhouse gas emissions from B.C. but, in subsection (c), "the actions that have been taken to achieve that progress..." and in subsection (d), "the plans to continue that progress." So it will be different than just an Excel spreadsheet showing numbers representing emissions of various tonnes of greenhouse gases from different locations.

It will also identify policies that have already been committed to, evaluate their progress and talk about additional plans that may be forthcoming. So it will be a working document that people can use to check to see what kind of things we're doing.

G. Robertson: Well, I'm very disappointed, given the commitment, obviously, that this government and preceding governments have had to annual reporting — in fact, quarterly reporting — when it comes to where taxpayer dollars are going.

The normal course of business, the normal course of government is quarterly reporting, and that rolled up into comprehensive annual reporting with service plans, in the case of our ministries now. So it strikes me as peculiar, regardless of the western climate initiative and the reporting that obviously is by necessity prepared for that partnership.

Why wouldn't this government at least pull off annual reporting on greenhouse gas emissions? If this is as important an issue as members on this side of the House certainly feel it is, certainly as important as where the taxpayer dollars are going... Yet we're not capable of reporting on this more often than every 24 months?

[1710]

It strikes me as a real contradiction in terms of the government's commitment to being diligent and aggressive in dealing with greenhouse gas emissions reductions. I don't understand how you can have it both ways — how you can say, "We're serious about this," and then: "Well, we'll report on it every couple of years."

Will there be any public reporting in between the 24 months that is set forth in this legislation regarding greenhouse gas emissions and progress toward the targets, or is this the sum total of the reporting to the public and the people of B.C. around greenhouse gas emissions reductions: once every two years?

Hon. B. Penner: I've probably said it six or seven times, but hey, I'll go for eight or nine. Statistics Canada, Environment Canada and Natural Resources Canada work together to collect greenhouse gas emission inventory data. It gets released every year, it will continue to be done every year, and it's publicly available. It's on the Internet, if the member cares to go take a look at it.

What we're talking about here is additional reporting on top of the current annual reporting. This report will be of a different nature. It will be talking about the different policy actions that government has introduced.

Now, it may be that we have a large suite of things that are new in terms of new policy actions to announce every three months, four times a year. However, I think it's more realistic to think that government will be announcing a number of activities maybe one or two times a year, in terms of a new suite of policy tools to be put in place, rather than doing it every three months.

Also, as I tried to explain earlier, the discussion around the table at WCI was that the primary driver of greenhouse gas emissions tends to be the consumption of fossil fuels. Now, on those consumption rates you'll start to see meaningful trends appear. Not in a one-year period but maybe in two years you'll start to see a trend. If we were to follow the member's advice and try to track changes in greenhouse gases every three months, you would probably see pretty significant swings due only to the fact of the temperature changes — there's reduced reliance on natural gas, for example, as a heating fuel — or a swing in the summertime when more people are travelling. That would not necessarily be indicative, however, of a real trend.

Instead, you would want to step back — if you're looking for useful information to help inform public policy decisions and debate — and look for a longer-term trend. If you're in the industrial sector, perhaps as a manufacturer of fruit juice, your natural gas consumption on an annual basis might be very significant, but it might fluctuate by month, depending on how much you're producing. The demand for your commodity and the temperatures that you need to maintain inside your manufacturing facility would probably vary significantly by season for a range of factors unrelated to the overall trend that you're likely to see, in terms of your consumption, if you look back at a year-to-year or a two-year period.

That's why there was consensus around the table from all jurisdictions in the WCI — including California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Manitoba — on a two-year period for this type of reporting. Where you're combining it with policy actions that governments have announced and new policies they're looking at, it would make sense for it to happen every two years — over and above the ongoing annual reporting that we already get from StatsCan, which will continue.

G. Robertson: Well, I profoundly disagree with the minister and his latest comments regarding quarterly reporting. We have been talking about annual reporting for comprehensive reports such as this, so I don't know where that digression into quarterly fluctuations comes from.

We have some better ideas here. I have an amendment to move to this bill on section 4, to amend it as follows:

[Section 4:

By striking out "even-numbered"

By striking out "the minister" *and substituting* "an independent body established for the purposes of this Act"

By adding (1) *before* "beginning with a report on 2008 BC greenhouse gas emissions"; *and*

By adding the following subsection:

(2) For the purpose of directing future plans for greenhouse gas emissions reductions in BC, a Parliamentary

Committee of the Legislative Assembly will be created. Beginning in 2008, the Select Standing Committee will be charged with examining the reports referred to in section (1), engaging with the public, and producing recommendations for the Legislative Assembly]

[1715]

On the amendment.

G. Robertson: On the amendment. First and foremost, we've covered the territory related to annual reporting. This side of the House supports annual reporting versus going every other year, as is being dictated, it appears, to this government by partners in the western climate initiative. We don't see a rationale for limiting the flow of information and restricting comprehensive reporting on progress toward the targets. That should be done annually, so we are amending by striking "even-numbered" so there is annual reporting.

On the critical issue regarding responsibility for this reporting. Rather than it being siloed off into the Environment Ministry, this government has said repeatedly that this is a governmentwide initiative. This is an initiative that calls upon all British Columbians to take action, to engage. It's important, therefore, that there be some independence to how our progress is being measured, how it is being gathered and how it is being reported upon.

To silo that within the Environment Ministry and for the reporting to the public to be limited to the minister's office is a classic example of how this government has treated the issue of climate change over this past nine months in a secretive process. Regarding climate change, the people of B.C. have had no opportunity to have input, to bring their ideas forward and to engage in the critical steps needed to make change to our lifestyles, to the way we do business, to the way this province actually makes some significant progress in the short term on reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

This side of the House feels passionately that the people of B.C. need a voice on climate change. This side of the House wants to see a legislative committee. We have called for a legislative committee on this issue over this past year. We want to see a legislative committee responsible for independent assessment of the progress of government, the progress of the sectors from different industries. We think it's very, very important that the public sees an independent and, in effect, non-partisan effort being made by this Legislative Assembly to engage the public, to hear what the concerns are, to hear what the ideas are, to hear where we can make quicker progress.

We see a perfect example, as described by the minister, in terms of the input period that we're in store for here regarding the setting of these targets. There will be a 45-day website-based feedback process for the people of B.C. to have input — much the same as there is for the environmental assessment process, which is laughable. Really, it mocks the severity of our challenge on climate change to put as epic a step here, in terms of legislation and in terms of the dramatic change that we're going to see in this province to achieve targets, into a 45-day

web-based comment period, when the people of B.C. have every right....

The government of B.C., one would think, would have the foresight to open the doors, to have an open, accountable, transparent process for public feedback and public input on what these targets are and how we achieve them. That can best be accomplished by striking a legislative committee that goes out and consults with the people of B.C. in a meaningful way, that ensures people's voices are heard in this House and that ensures a level of scrutiny and independence in looking at the actual progress being made on reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

[1720]

If these progress reports are again siloed in one ministry that, in effect, only opens its ears for 45 days for those who happen to have access to a computer and know how to go through the process of sending their input to the ministry's website, that severely limits the input that will come forth from the people of B.C. on the most important issue of our time, the most important issue for this generation to deal with.

Again, I will just restate that this side of the House will not stand for a secretive, closed-door, pinched-off process with the people of B.C. in addressing climate change. We want to see an independent, non-partisan, vigorous exercise working with the people of B.C. to tackle climate change and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions.

The Chair: Member, because the motion requires striking a parliamentary committee and that would require the expenditure of public funds, accordingly, I rule this amendment out of order.

On section 4 (*continued*).

Hon. B. Penner: Nevertheless, I'd like to just respond to the member's comments because he's done what I heretofore thought was physically impossible.

Interjection.

Hon. B. Penner: I'm on section 4. The amendment's defeated. I'm on section 4.

B. Ralston: Madam Speaker, I just heard you rule the amendment out of order. I don't see how the minister can then purport to speak on the same amendment.

Hon. B. Penner: Just addressing the member's comments and concerns....

The Chair: Minister, on section 4.

Hon. B. Penner: On section 4. He's done what I thought was physically impossible — sucking and blowing at the same time.

Their Environment critic, just moments ago, was saying that we should move to implement the interim targets more quickly — not wait until the end of 2008,

but do them as quickly as possible. Now this member is criticizing the 45-day comment period and saying that that's not enough, that it should be longer. But then how do you get the interim targets set before the end of 2008? They can't have it both ways.

The opposition, on the one hand, says that the Ministry of Environment should have a greater role. Now I hear this member saying: why does the Ministry of Environment have such a significant role in dealing with climate change?

The reports will be presented to the Legislature by the Minister of Environment — whoever it may be at the time — and they will be held responsible, firstly to their colleagues in cabinet, secondly to the members of the Legislative Assembly and thirdly to the public. I believe that public accountability actually works, and the proof of the pudding is what happened in 2001.

The previous NDP government was held accountable for their performance. The public did hold them accountable for a 24-percent increase in greenhouse gas emissions while the economy went from first place in Canada to last place in Canada and while people had to leave the province to look for jobs and opportunity. The public had a chance to hold them accountable in 2001, and they most certainly did.

Section 4 approved.

On section 5.

G. Robertson: On section 5, and we move regretfully on from the inability of this government to embrace public process to the carbon-neutral public sector and setting targets for the carbon-neutral public sector.

The bill describes the necessity for each public sector organization to be carbon-neutral for the 2010 calendar year and each subsequent calendar year. Will the minister clarify, in terms of public sector organizations, whether B.C. Ferries will be included in terms of its requirement to be carbon-neutral?

[1725]

Hon. B. Penner: Section 1, the definition section of the bill, helps address the member's question. The legislation is intended to capture the government reporting entity, and B.C. Ferries is not captured by the government's central reporting entity.

G. Robertson: Well, this is disconcerting — that what may be the largest emitter in terms of so-called government-owned operations does not have to comply with the carbon-neutral mandate for the public sector.

Will the minister clarify whether there are any other Crown corporations or agencies that are not included under the definition of "public sector organization"?

Hon. B. Penner: Section 5 does apply to those Crown corporations and government agencies that are captured by the reporting entity as defined by the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act unless

excluded by regulation under this act. That's provided for in section 1 of the definitions.

G. Robertson: Well, for the benefit of all the fine people of British Columbia watching here today who don't happen to have a copy of the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act handy, it would be helpful to know specifically which government entities are exempt from carbon-neutral.

The minister has clarified that B.C. Ferries is exempt from having to be carbon-neutral. Can the minister just clarify which other Crown corps or agencies are exempt from carbon-neutral, maybe starting with B.C. Hydro?

Hon. B. Penner: The member has suggested we refer to the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act specifically, so I will. A "government organization" is defined in section 1 of that act as "a corporation or other organization that is within the government reporting entity...." Then it goes on to talk about the consolidated revenue fund and whether an entity is captured by that, etc.

To perhaps further assist the member, he could just turn his attention to the news release we put out last week when we introduced the legislation on November 20. If the member refers to the fourth paragraph of that news release, it states as follows: "The act requires the provincial government, including provincial ministries and agencies, schools, colleges, universities, health authorities and Crown corporations, to become carbon-neutral by 2010."

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

G. Robertson: Well, I'm perplexed by the minister's unwillingness to actually identify which entities are exempt from being carbon-neutral. He has clarified that B.C. Ferries is not required to be carbon-neutral, but he's getting into the mumbo-jumbo, which doesn't serve the people who are watching or will refer to these transcripts and don't have the benefit of seeing public affairs bureau press releases from last week.

[1730]

If I need to be more specific, perhaps I'll try with the public-private partnerships that are in play, specifically the Abbotsford hospital. Will that hospital be required to be carbon-neutral, given that it's being operated by a private partner?

Are any of the projects that have operating agreements with private contractors required to be carbon-neutral, even though they fall within the health authorities?

Hon. B. Penner: Health authorities will be responsible to make sure that they are carbon-neutral in terms of their entire operations. I would expect the new Abbotsford hospital to be a significant and important part of the Fraser Health Authority's operations on a go-forward basis.

Certainly, it's significant from the perspective of people in the Fraser Valley, who have waited a long

time for a new hospital to be built. There were repeated promises in the 1990s that it would happen. It never happened, but we are making it happen. I know people are looking forward to having that additional health resource next year, in the relatively near future.

G. Robertson: Is the Abbotsford hospital within government reporting? Is it a government reporting entity? And as such, will it be affected by the carbon-neutral mandate here?

Hon. B. Penner: The Fraser Health Authority will be responsible for reporting their emissions from their operations, and the new Abbotsford hospital will be a very proud part of their operations.

G. Robertson: Well, the minister isn't answering the question specifically. Is the Abbotsford hospital within the government reporting entity?

Hon. B. Penner: The member will appreciate that I'm not the Minister of Health. I would be happy to forward that question to my colleague and endeavour to get an answer for the member.

[1735]

However, the Fraser Health Authority will be responsible for reporting on their operations. They operate numerous facilities, and they will be operating the Abbotsford hospital among those numerous facilities.

G. Robertson: Maybe just one more to clarify here. Will the grossly over budget Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre fall within the requirement to be carbon-neutral?

Hon. B. Penner: The member will know that that project is not a P3, which is of course one of the reasons why it's given taxpayers the concern that it has. But I'll defer to my colleague the minister responsible for that particular project. My understanding is that it's not a public-private partnership.

G. Robertson: We're here debating an important piece of legislation, and understanding which public sector organizations, as envisioned in section 5, must be carbon-neutral is important to have clarified here and now while we're in committee stage debate.

Once again, I will repeat my question to the minister. Does the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre qualify as a public sector organization that must comply with the carbon-neutral requirement by 2010?

Hon. B. Penner: As I've already indicated, I'm not the minister responsible for that particular project, but I will endeavour to get the information for the member — noting again that it's not a public-private partnership.

G. Robertson: Well, I'm puzzled by the process here in that if the minister can't make those answers available while we are debating the bill.... So I'll just

note there's some urgency to knowing the answers to these questions. If he's unable to answer and clarify.... Who is responsible, as public sector organizations, to be carbon-neutral?

Maybe I'll expand my question a little into public sector organizations that do utilize alternate service delivery. Are those PSOs that are utilizing alternative service delivery required to be carbon-neutral?

[1740]

Hon. B. Penner: I just had a chance to confer briefly with my colleague the Minister of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, who advises me that B.C. Pavilion Corporation — or PavCo, as it's better known — will be responsible for the operations of the convention centre. The member will be aware that PavCo, as it's known, is a Crown corporation. Crown corporations are identified in the legislation as being caught by the requirement to be carbon-neutral by 2010.

G. Robertson: It's peculiar to hear that the trade and convention centre would be required, through PavCo, to be carbon-neutral, when my understanding is that the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre Authority is exempted, as is B.C. Ferries, in terms of regulation, from the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act.

In terms of interpreting all of this, if the Vancouver Trade and Convention Centre is exempted from the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act and yet its operations fall within PavCo, which is required, as a public sector organization, to be carbon-neutral...? Does that, in fact, mean that the trade and convention centre must be carbon-neutral with all of these guests showing up in 2010? Or that they don't have to be, because they're exempted?

Hon. B. Penner: Again, I'm not the minister responsible for the trade and convention centre nor for the B.C. Pavilion Corporation, also known as PavCo, which is a Crown corporation. I'm not able to give the member perhaps the level of detail that he's looking for about that specific building.

The member will appreciate that the government of British Columbia operates, I would suspect, literally thousands of buildings in hundreds of communities across the province. The government is a large entity. We've set the objectives in the legislation. The news release actually does a good job of summarizing it. Whether it be schools, hospitals, Crown corporations or government ministries, they are intended to be carbon-neutral by 2010. That is a legal requirement set out in this bill.

If we want to get into the specificity about every individual building operated by partners of various ministries or agencies in small towns like Bella Coola, or elsewhere around the province, that is probably best done at a later date, when we get a chance to drill down to those kinds of details. The legislative intent is clear, however, for the government reporting entity, and that is to be carbon-neutral by 2010.

G. Robertson: Let me just remind the minister that the devil is in the details here, and we're not talking about a small installation in Bella Coola. We're talking about something that this government has blown over \$400 million in losses on. It will be an almost billion-dollar project. It would be nice if it was required to be carbon-neutral, after putting close to a billion dollars into the place.

Apparently, as shiny and happy as the press release might have been, it appears we don't have clarity on what specifically applies and doesn't apply in terms of the requirement to be carbon-neutral. I think this government has jumped up and down about the Abbotsford hospital and jumped up and down about the trade and convention centre.

[1745]

Certainly, there are monumental projects that one would think some scrutiny had been placed upon with regards to their emissions and the necessity for them to be carbon-neutral, but the minister doesn't seem to have that information at his disposal here.

Regardless of that, I'm going to continue along this line of questions, because there are indeed other organizations under the umbrella of the government that the opposition is concerned may not have been included in this carbon-neutral requirement.

Can the minister clarify whether Maximus, which is contracted to perform a great number of services for the government of B.C., will be required to be carbon-neutral in the provision of those services as well?

Hon. B. Penner: I'm not intimately familiar with the role or job of Maximus. I've never had a briefing on that particular company or organization, so I'm not able to give the member a detailed answer.

G. Robertson: We'll try another one. Maybe there will be some clarity here on one of these.

Will the minister just clarify whether the contractor for Revenue Services of B.C. — which has recently taken on hundreds of millions of dollars of work for the Ministry of Small Business and Revenue in the collection of taxes from the people of B.C. — will be required to be carbon-neutral in providing those services to the government of B.C.

Hon. B. Penner: I'm not sure if the member is running out of questions, but there are still other sections to the bill. He could go through a litany of different companies that perform work for the province and ask questions, I suppose, about every courier company or whatnot, but the general principles of the bill are actually pretty clear.

Section 5 refers to public service organizations having to be carbon-neutral by 2010. A public service organization is defined in section 1 of the bill, so you go back to section 1 and read the definition of public sector organization.

It means any of the following: "(a) the Provincial government; (b) an organization or corporation that is not part of the Provincial government but is included

within the government reporting entity under the *Budget Transparency and Accountability Act*...." We talked about that already. And there are some other provisions in there.

The member can answer the question, perhaps, for himself. Is the entity that he's asking about or the company part of the reporting entity under the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act? That answer, whatever it may be, goes a long way to answering his question about whether or not it's captured by section 5.

G. Robertson: Well, let me just express my profound disappointment with the minister for evading the answers to these questions. We're just seeking basic detail on who is affected by this legislation.

Who has to comply with the legislation? One would think that there would be a clean list here. We're bringing up very significant projects taking place now in B.C. — very significant operations of government. They've been hived off, contracted out to private contractors under this government.

It begs the question: do those operators who provide a significant percentage of the services to some of the public sector organizations that report through the Budget Transparency and Accountability Act need to comply with the carbon-neutral requirement in this legislation?

[1750]

These are very simple questions about organizations, which maybe the minister doesn't want to answer, doesn't feel like answering, has no clue what the answer is. But we need to ask these questions. We need to know what applies. If we don't ask these questions, we're not doing our jobs.

I would just extend another example here, because I'm hoping that at least there's somewhere where we drill down and find that this has been thought through and that there's some substance, specifically in the Ministry of Transportation with regards to highways contractors, some of which are exclusively providing services to the Ministry of Transportation. That's what they do. Will those highways contractors be required to be carbon-neutral as exclusive providers to the Ministry of Transportation?

Hon. B. Penner: The primary focus of this part of the bill, which is titled "Carbon Neutral Public Sector," is to focus on the public sector. The definition of public sector is contained in section 1, and there's a subsection there that has the definition of "public sector organization." I commend that to the member for reading at his leisure. It talks about core government and Crown corporations.

If the member is looking for a list of what a Crown corporation is, at the risk of asking him to do some additional work, there's a list available on the government website that lists all the Crown corporations. That's hosted by the Crown corps secretariat of government, and that website is publicly available.

The member may be getting confused about what this commitment is versus other legislation and requirements

that are coming and that we've already signalled, and that is that the private sector will be expected to reduce emissions as well. That legislation is under development. We've said that we have additional measures we're planning to introduce in the spring. All sectors of the economy outside the public sector, including the private sector, will be required to reduce their emissions.

[1755]

The member may be thinking about those additional steps that are coming. What we're dealing with here in part 2.... The focus is on the public sector.

G. Robertson: Well, we're focusing on services delivered by public service organizations. Some of them, at the direction of this government, have been farmed out and privatized, so it seems a reasonable question to ask whether the privatized services as delivered through a public sector organization are covered by part 2, section 5, and the requirement to be carbon-neutral. Again, I am stumped as to why there isn't more clarity on if these services as provided are or aren't covered.

I'll ask a few more questions as to who's included in this — specifically, the Olympics project, the \$600 million being invested in the Olympics and the facilities that are being built on the south coast. Are the facilities and the expenditure related to the 2010 games included in the carbon-neutral requirement?

Hon. B. Penner: Facilities that are owned by the provincial government and operated by them would obviously be captured by the definition of public service organization in section 1 of the act. The member can read about that.

In addition, if there's a facility that's operated by a local government.... For example, Richmond's going to have the speed skating oval. I believe they may have been one of the 60 or more local governments that signed on to the UBCM charter that they had in September at the UBCM convention, where various local governments committed to greenhouse gas reduction targets from their own operations. It may be captured by that.

But over and above those two points, I am advised that the Vancouver organizing committee for the 2010 games has their own sustainability plan, which will be announced very soon.

G. Robertson: Given that the \$600 million expenditure is routed through, I believe, the secretariat for the Olympics and there are direct expenses into these facilities and beyond in terms of the operations for the 2010 games.... I understand the distinction between who operates the facilities going forward, post-2010 games, but I'm curious if the province's investment of \$600 million through the secretariat into the 2010 games is linked directly to the carbon-neutral requirements and whether the \$110 million in operating funds set aside from the levels of government, in fact, are tied to carbon-neutral requirement.

[1800]

Hon. B. Penner: The member may be confusing a couple of issues here. We made a funding commitment

a number of years ago: about \$600 million for the province. That funding commitment was made — and probably a significant portion of those dollars expended — prior to the Speech from the Throne in February of this year, and certainly prior to us debating this bill here today.

Regardless, I am told that VANOC is working on an additional plan that you'll be hearing about very shortly. They've already made a public commitment to making this the most sustainable Olympic Games ever. I know they are working on specific items around reducing their carbon footprint for the Olympic Games, and members can expect an announcement relatively soon from VANOC in that regard.

In terms of whether something is caught by the public sector organization definition, it does talk about whether something is part of the reporting entity of government — whether it's a Crown corporation or central government itself. If any of those criteria is triggered, then yes, certainly the carbon-neutral requirement of part 2 of this bill, Bill 44, is triggered and does apply.

D. Cubberley: I appreciate having an opportunity to weigh in and ask some questions on section 5. I wanted to come back to the notion of government becoming carbon-neutral on time lines by the mechanism of this legislation. To begin, I wanted to ask: in calculating what public sector organization greenhouse gas emissions actually are, was a conscious choice made to exclude employee travel to and from work, or did that happen by chance?

[1805]

Hon. B. Penner: I am advised that by normal practice, when the carbon footprint for businesses is calculated, it does not include the travel of employees getting to and from their places of work. Rather, it focuses on what that business or organization is responsible for — what they can control and what they can measure — which are the emissions from their own operations, not the emissions from people who may be travelling to and from work to their organization. We looked at what other practices are in place elsewhere for measuring emissions from large organizations, and that was the model that was adopted here.

D. Cubberley: I find it interesting that the suggestion would be made that the practices elsewhere for the calculation of emissions, broadly speaking, don't include the employers' contribution via induced travel. That's what this sector is about; it's induced travel. If one were to model government operations, the induced travel to and from work would probably show up as one of the largest carbon impacts, if not the largest impact, that any employer has.

I do know from experience that in California, through the California Air Resources Board, for a very long time now there has been a requirement on all employers of 100 employees or more to introduce travel demand management plans that shift choices

away from high-emitting vehicles and towards lower-emitting vehicles. That is a legal obligation placed on all employers in California.

That's been in operation for a very long time, and of course, it was an attempt to capture emissions before the more particular focus that we have today on carbon. These were tailpipe emissions, and that has been in operation for a long time.

What I would be interested in noting and having the minister comment on is if there was any discussion on the government side about an employer's responsibility for the induced travel demand, given that in British Columbia the largest single source of greenhouse gas emissions is from mobile sources — 40 percent or more for the entire provincial contribution to greenhouse gas emissions. In a place like Victoria, which has relatively less by way of industrial emissions, over 50 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions come from mobile sources.

The principal contributor within that and, quite frankly, the thing that drives the entire transportation investment equation in every province in Canada and in every state in the United States is peak-hour traffic. Peak-hour traffic is principally revolving around the need to accommodate travel to and from work, a highly patterned form of travel.

It is my understanding in the entire time I've been involved in advocacy, which is nigh on 20 years in this sector, that there has always been tremendous pressure — in California given effect through legislation — to place an obligation on employers to assume responsibility for the travel demands their employees place on transportation facilities and on the public airshed. I'm very interested to know what kind of substantive discussion there was around this fact. Intuitively, until someone contradicts me, probably the largest part of government's carbon footprint is travel to and from work.

[1810]

Hon. B. Penner: There is a range of initiatives underway where the province has done things to encourage people to cycle to work or find alternative ways of getting to work. We are also funding additional buses for transit, for example, depending on where you live.

In the Vancouver area, for example, we're helping fund a \$1.9-billion addition to the SkyTrain project. I know the members opposite usually speak in very negative terms about that project, but it's one that I'm very excited about, from an environmental perspective, because of the benefits the environment will receive once that project is up and running. I very much look forward to it being completed.

An employer has a difficult time telling an employee how he or she must get to work. To say that that's induced travel.... We don't specify to an employee how you must get to work nor where you must live if you're going to work for us. Perhaps the NDP thinks we should tell employees that as part of signing up to work for the provincial government, you must commit to live within a certain radius of your place of

employment. If so, let them say so and put that forward as an idea.

Instead, what we've done already, Mr. Chair, and you'll be familiar with this, is that we've offered a \$2,000 incentive to encourage people to consider the purchase of hybrid vehicles to reduce their emissions and their carbon footprint. I've mentioned the dollars announced already for additional infrastructure for transportation and for new buses, and we're planning more. I think people in British Columbia will hear more about that in the next few weeks, about the government's plans.

We are always looking for new ways to encourage people to stay healthy, and that's why we have the ActNow initiative. Every year we promote cycling to work as an initiative, and walking to work. We think that that is a legitimate role. But if we're going to tell people how close they must live to work or how they must travel to work, then the next step is to suggest that their house must be induced housing because they bought that place of accommodation in order to work at their jobsite.

We will be announcing initiatives to assist everyone in British Columbia to reduce the emissions from their homes and to help them be more energy-efficient, whether it's through better insulation or the use of better furnaces and the like. But the member needs to know that this bill is just one of numerous pieces that the government is bringing forward over the next while to further reduce emissions in British Columbia. You'll be hearing more about that in the days and weeks to come.

[1815]

D. Cubberley: That was an amazing string of off-message comments, considering what the question was and what the suggestion was. Before the minister styles employer responsibility for shaping employee travel choices as incipient communism, I really would encourage him to spend a bit of time studying what California has been doing since 1967, because I can assure you that it was brought in under, quite frequently, the most right-wing of governments that we have known. But they nonetheless grasped that employers have to assume some responsibility for the way in which employees get to work and that, in fact, it is a tool for shaping choice, not for telling people. You incentivize the change.

When we look at making the kinds of reductions that the bill is committing us to, which I strongly support, we're going to have to, just as the minister challenged us to do, open our minds and innovate. One of the innovations is that we're going to have to use all the tools.

We will not get where we need to go by neglecting the transportation sector. We will not get there by saying: "Transportation is an individual choice, and this is over to you, Mr. and Mrs. Consumer." We will not get there by giving employers a free ride on this. Employers will have to grapple with the problem. And guess what? When employers do grapple with the problem,

they become champions of change. And that is, in fact, what the whole exercise is about — all of us, in whatever sphere we're in, becoming champions of change.

The minister mentioned earlier, and he said quite proudly — and I would agree with him — that we're challenging businesses to change. We're challenging communities to change. We're challenging individuals to change. We're even challenging government.

Well, what I and members on this side of the House want to do is raise the bar. We want to challenge government more effectively. We want government to take more responsibility, and what we really want to avoid is a claim of carbon neutrality when the entire iceberg of impacts, carbon footprint, is not being considered by the bill. So I want to help the minister, because he does want innovation.

What I want to attempt to do through your offices, Mr. Chairman, is to move an amendment.

[Section 5:

In subsection 5 (3) by adding "including reducing the carbon impact of employee travel to and from work" after "greenhouse gas emissions."

By adding the following subsections:

5 (4) Minimizing PSO greenhouse gas emissions must include Transportation Demand Management plans at all provincial workplaces that shift employee travel choices from automobiles to low-carbon options like transit, walking and cycling.

5 (5) Pursuant to 5 (4), the Government of British Columbia will:

- (a) model best practices in shifting travel demand to low-carbon choices; and
- (b) support low-carbon choices like walking, cycling and transit, in proportion to their potential to contribute to meeting provincial greenhouse gas reduction targets.]

On the amendment.

D. Cubberley: The amendment would have the effect of simply doing three things. It would include specifically reducing the carbon impact of employee travel to and from work into the legislation. It would commit to minimizing PSO greenhouse gas emissions by saying that they must include transportation demand management plans at all workplaces that the provincial government runs. And beyond that, the provincial government would commit itself through this amendment to model best practices in shifting travel demand to low-carbon options, which would give you an opportunity to innovate, figure out what works and then tell others, and then support low-carbon choices like walking, cycling and transit in proportion to their potential to contribute to meeting provincial greenhouse gas reduction targets.

The Chair: You may speak on the amendment on section 5 while we consider the amendment.

D. Cubberley: I'll just continue in that vein and implore the minister. We do have in front of us what Al Gore and our Premier have agreed is a planetary emergency. This is not a time for small plans. It's a steep learning curve. Many people have been engaged at the community

level, at other levels, in attempting to innovate in precisely the directions that we are going to have to travel, which is to get more people to engage in the use of transit, to walk and cycle more and, in particular, to do that while commuting to work.

The commuting-to-work side of it is the most important section of the travel market to influence, because it's the most patterned behaviour in society. It's the behaviour that can be influenced. We know we have to drive less in order to meet greenhouse gas reduction targets. Most of us know intuitively that we cannot be carbon-neutral as a provincial government unless we do tackle travel demand by employees and help to shift it towards low-carbon rides.

[1820]

All of that is entirely feasible to do, but it requires government to be a champion and to assume responsibility. So I view this as a friendly amendment to the bill. I think others on this side see it that way. I believe that the Premier is sincere in seeing the threat to society, and I believe that government is a major force for positive change or can be. I merely hope to convince members on the other side of the House to support this amendment, because this will become a feather in your cap.

The most important thing about this is to grasp that your own workforce, our provincial workforce, is the best-positioned workforce to make change in the direction that has to be made in all of society. Here we have 30,000 people in the provincial civil service who would welcome this engagement by government.

So, with that, I thank the Chair.

Hon. B. Penner: I think the member neglects a number of things in addition to what I've already said about what the provincial government's doing to encourage people to pursue other transportation alternatives — and not just people that work for the provincial government but all British Columbians.

We have provided a \$40 million LocalMotion fund to help local governments build walkways, cycling paths, disability access and other improvements aimed at getting people out of their cars and back on their feet — which is also consistent with our goals to improve people's personal health through the ActNow initiative.

The member has not paid any attention to our commitment to renewable fuels and low-carbon content for fuels — something that we've already committed to and that you'll be hearing more about in the next session of this Legislature, Mr. Chair.

We're also, of course, working on a 30-percent tail-pipe reduction by 2016. That will be a benefit because it will apply to vehicles operated by all British Columbians — not just people that work for the provincial government but all people in British Columbia. And, of course, the vast majority of British Columbians do not work for the public service.

We are looking at a whole suite of initiatives, and I know that the Finance Minister is working diligently on a budget for the spring that may contain additional measures. For that, you'll have to stay tuned, because I

will not be pre-empting her decisions over the next little while. But there are many different policy tools being examined by government, in addition to the numerous ones we've already implemented.

The Chair: I call the question on the proposed amendment to Bill 44. The amendment is as follows:

"Section 5: In subsection 5 (3) by adding 'including reducing the carbon impact of employee travel to and from work' after 'greenhouse gas emissions.' By adding the following subsections: 5 (4) Minimizing PSO greenhouse gas emissions must include Transportation Demand Management plans at all provincial workplaces that shift employee travel choices from automobiles to low-carbon options like transit, walking and cycling, 5 (5) Pursuant to 5 (4), the Government of British Columbia will: (a) model best practices in shifting travel demand to low-carbon choices; and (b) support low-carbon choices like walking, cycling and transit, in proportion to their potential to contribute to meeting provincial greenhouse gas reduction targets."

[1825-1830]

Amendment negatived on the following division:

YEAS — 30

Brar	Fleming	Farnworth
James	Kwan	Ralston
Cubberley	Hammell	Coons
Thorne	Simons	Gentner
Routley	Fraser	Horgan
Lali	Dix	Trevena
Bains	Robertson	Karagianis
Evans	Krog	Austin
Chudnovsky	Chouhan	Wyse
Sather	Macdonald	Conroy

NAYS — 37

Falcon	Coell	Ilich
Christensen	Les	Richmond
Bell	Krueger	Roddick

Hayer	Jarvis	Nuraney
Whittred	Cantelon	Thorpe
Hagen	Oppal	de Jong
Taylor	Bond	Hansen
Abbott	Penner	Neufeld
Coleman	Hogg	Sultan
Bennett	Lekstrom	Mayencourt
Polak	Hawes	Yap
MacKay	Black	McIntyre
	Rustad	

Sections 5 to 14 inclusive approved.

Title approved.

Hon. B. Penner: Hon. Chair, I move the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 6:31 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Report and Third Reading of Bills

GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTION TARGETS ACT

Bill 44, Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets Act, reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

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

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 6:32 p.m.

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Published by British Columbia Hansard Services and printed under the authority of the Speaker by the Queen's Printer, Victoria. Rates: single issue, \$2.85; per calendar year, mailed daily, \$378. GST extra.
Agent: Crown Publications Inc., 106 Ontario St., Victoria, B.C. V8V 1M9.
Toll-Free: 1-877-747-4636. Telephone: (250) 386-4636. Fax: (250) 386-0221.

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