



Fifth Session, 38th Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT OF  
**DEBATES OF THE  
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, March 11, 2009**  
**Afternoon Sitting**  
**Volume 40, Number 1**

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

**FIFTH SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT**

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Afternoon Sitting

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2009

The House met at 1:35 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Prayers.

### Introductions by Members

**Hon. G. Campbell:** I'm pleased to introduce probably the youngest visitor in the House today. She's the newest addition to the Sharma family, four-and-a-half-month-old Amiyah Aishi Sharma. She is joined by her parents, Amy and Rishi. I hope the House will make them welcome.

**D. Cubberley:** Tomorrow is World Kidney Day. As the House may know, over 30,000 Canadians now require dialysis or a kidney transplant just in order to stay alive, and the numbers are rising quickly with the diabetes epidemic.

We're in Kidney Health Month; it's March. Tomorrow is World Kidney Day. In order to raise awareness of it, members of the Kidney Foundation of Canada are holding a clinic here in the precincts today to raise awareness of kidney disease, which in most cases is preventable. Members who haven't had their blood pressure checked can get this done quickly after question period, up until three o'clock today.

I'm not recommending, though, that ministers answering multiple questions have this check done until they've fully calmed down.

Joining us in the gallery today are Doug Hobbs, a director and past president of the Victoria chapter, and Diana Dobson, past president of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, Victoria chapter. Will members please join me in making them welcome.

**Hon. R. Coleman:** A significant event took place 30 years ago today. A short little fellow — at least, most people are short to me, anyway — by the name of Bill Bond married his blushing bride. That was the Deputy Premier and Minister of Education. I would like to wish them a happy 30th anniversary today.

**N. Simons:** It gives me great pleasure to welcome to the House today directors of first nations child welfare agencies who are visiting and are here to meet on a quarterly basis to talk about issues facing their communities.

They are Mary Teegee from Carrier-Sekani; Warner Adam also from Carrier-Sekani child and family services; Kathleen Bennett from Northwest Inter-Nation family and child services; William Yoachim from Kw'umt'lelum; Kelowa Edel from Xyolhemeylh; Anna Sawyer from NIL/TU,O; Midge Stewart; Arlene Adie from Knucwentwecw

in Williams Lake; Lloyd McJames from Gitksan; Assanta Rosal from Okanagan Nation Child and Family Services; Corine Stone from Desniqi in the Chilcotin; Nita Walkem from Metlakatla child and family services. They're joined by Ken Adie as well.

Would the House please make them all welcome.

**R. Sultan:** In the precinct today are Alan Lill, who works with the \$21 million living rivers fund created by this government; Rod Clapton of the South Coast Steelhead Coalition; and Ted Brookman of the B.C. Wildlife Federation.

They brought forward seven key recommendations arising from the steelhead summit held four months ago in Burnaby and attended by approximately 65 steelhead experts and MLAs. Would the House please make them welcome.

### Tributes

#### WILLIAMS LAKE HOCKEY CHAMPIONS

**B. Simpson:** On behalf of the MLA for Cariboo South — and I ask the MLA for Powell River–Sunshine Coast to plug his ears and ask his forgiveness.... For the first time in franchise history, the Williams Lake Stampeders won the Coy Cup and are the champions for the men's double-A hockey.

Apparently it was quite the game. It went into overtime. Gilbert Robbins secured the final goal with a cross-ice pass from Francis Johnson with 6:24 left in the overtime period. Our congratulations to the general manager Don Hanson, coach Kelly Kohlen and the entire team of the Williams Lake Stampeders. Way to go, boys.

### Introductions by Members

**K. Whittred:** Members, on behalf of the Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome a group of public servants who are seated today in the gallery. They are participating in a full-day parliamentary procedure workshop offered by the Legislative Assembly.

[1340]

The workshop provides a firsthand opportunity for the public service to gain a greater understanding of the relationship between the work of their ministries and how that work affects this Legislature. Would the House please join me in making them feel very welcome.

**N. Macdonald:** I have the pleasure of introducing a few people who are from Golden originally. Aleta Salmon and Martina Bezzola are attending the University of Victoria, and they're part of two very

well-established Golden families. I'd like you to make them welcome, as well as John Frederick, who is joining them, also from Golden. Please join me in making them welcome.

I'd also like to introduce Ellen Zimmerman, who is here. She is a very well-known environmental activist — legendary, actually, and award-winning. She's from Golden as well.

I also see Raj Patara, who is another former student. She's from Golden, joining us, so I don't know who's left in Golden. Please join me in making them all feel welcome.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** Today in the gallery is a group of articling students from the Ministry of Attorney General. They are here to take part in the continuing legal education session regarding law-making, the legislative process — and question period. No.

They are Laura Baptie, Meghan Butler, Alison Luke, Pamela Manhas, Johnny Van Camp, and Kirsten Wharton. They're accompanied by Corrine Swystun, who is from the legislative counsel office. I'd ask that the House please make them welcome, and I thank them for what they're doing.

**H. Bains:** My constituency assistant Raj Patara — one of the best, full of energy, obviously taught by one of the best teachers — is in the House, and she's full of ideas. Please help me welcome her to the House.

**Hon. S. Bond:** One of the important things we always want to recognize is the incredible work that is done by public servants in ministries across government. Today I'm very pleased that we have seven members of the Ministry of Education team. They are terrific, and I wanted all of us to make them welcome.

They are Heather Macatee, Jennifer Coward, Morag Masterton, Joan Sabourin, Elda Harvey, Tanya Trafford and Carrie Preziuso. They do a great job on behalf of British Columbians every day, and I know you'll want to join me in making them most welcome.

**Hon. M. Coell:** I want the House to welcome three guests from my constituency: MaryLynne Rimer, the board chair of school district 63; Keven Elder, the superintendent of schools; and Joan Axford, the secretary-treasurer for school district 63. Would the House please make them welcome.

**Hon. B. Bennett:** It's my pleasure to introduce to the House today the former mayor of Revelstoke, a great guy and the next MLA for Columbia River–Revelstoke, Mark McKee. Please help make him welcome.

**R. Hawes:** Today in the gallery are two of my constituents, Peter and Viola Ewert. They came out here seeking a little bit of spring weather and maybe picked

the wrong time, it looks like. Peter has been very, very busy since retiring from a 30-year career with the Ministry of Agriculture. Could the House please make both Peter and Viola very welcome.

### Introduction and First Reading of Bills

#### PUBLIC SAFETY AND SOLICITOR GENERAL STATUTES AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

Hon. J. van Dongen presented a message from His Honour the Lieutenant-Governor: a bill intituled Public Safety and Solicitor General Statutes Amendment Act, 2009.

**Hon. J. van Dongen:** I move the bill be introduced and read a first time now.

[1345]

Motion approved.

**Hon. J. van Dongen:** I am pleased to introduce the Public Safety and Solicitor General Statutes Amendment Act, 2009. This bill contains amendments to the Motor Vehicle Act in support of B.C.'s enhanced driver's licence program to be rolled out on May 1, 2009.

These amendments include a new fine for fraud offences related to drivers' licences, identification cards, enhanced drivers' licences and enhanced identification cards. Individuals who commit fraud are subject to a new fine of \$400 to \$20,000 and/or to imprisonment up to six months. This change builds on recent security upgrades to the B.C. driver's licence to help prevent fraud and identity theft.

The bill will also authorize ICBC to retain or seize fraudulent documents used to apply for or maintain a record related to drivers' licences or identification cards, including enhanced forms used for travel to the U.S. by land or water. Legislative amendments of a housekeeping nature are required to update references in the Insurance (Vehicle) Act and Motor Vehicle Act to remain consistent with recent changes to the Criminal Code, including new provisions for street racing and impaired driving.

These amendments are necessary to ensure that an individual convicted under the Criminal Code for new impaired driving offences will be subject to provincial sanctions currently in place under the Motor Vehicle Act, such as participation in the responsible driver program and ignition interlock.

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

Bill 10, Public Safety and Solicitor General Statutes Amendment Act, 2009, introduced, read a first time and ordered to be placed on orders of the day for second reading at the next sitting of the House after today.

**Statements  
(Standing Order 25B)**

**B.C. COMMUNITY ACHIEVEMENT AWARD  
RECIPIENTS IN RICHMOND**

**O. Ilich:** Yesterday three people from my community of Richmond were honoured with B.C. Community Achievement Awards. Jim Kojima has been involved for over 50 years in the Steveston Community Society. I actually have very fond memories of Jim, because when I was growing up in Steveston, hard as this may be to believe, he taught me judo when I was a teenager.

He continues to be involved in the Minoru Senior Centre and is working very hard on the 2009 Seniors Games coming to my community this year. Jim is dedicated to every aspect of his neighbourhood, and his commitment and strength embody the spirit of the B.C. Achievement Awards.

Don Montgomery also received an award for his commitment to multicultural appreciation, education and promotion. His involvement in the Vancouver Asian Heritage Month Society and the Vancouver Asian Film Festival Society has brought together a diverse group of ethnocultural artists and enthusiasts. Don works to create open dialogue and bring together British Columbians in an invaluable way.

Finally, Cynthia Chen was honoured. Cynthia Chen served on Richmond city council and with Chimo Crisis Services. She worked hard to raise funds for Nova House, a safe refuge for women and children traumatized by violence.

Since opening in 1981 Nova House has housed more than 5,000 women and children in several different houses. But in 2003, with support from all three levels of government, community groups, businesses and many individual donors, Chimo built and fully equipped a beautiful, new, purpose-built, permanent facility called Nova House. Cynthia has been an active member in that regard and also with the chamber of commerce. She has great integrity and a passion for community service.

I want to thank each of them for their inspiring hard work and dedication to the community, and I ask the House to do the same.

**FILM ON YOUTH AND GANG VIOLENCE**

**H. Bains:** Two and a half years ago I had the great pleasure of meeting a young individual named Mani Amar. Mani decided to move to the Lower Mainland from Port Alberni when he was 18 to go to school to take graphic arts. Mani didn't realize that this move to educate himself was going to open his eyes to a world different from what he knew.

What Mani saw nine years ago was that the South Asian community in the greater Vancouver area had

been shaken by epidemic proportions of South Asian youth and gang violence — grim statistics such as the death of over 100 South Asians over the past 19 years. Talk about an eye-opener for a young individual from a rural community coming to a big city.

This young individual decided that he was going to make a difference, so he decided to use what he knows best to get the message out. He used art to educate our South Asian youth, families and others in the community. Mani made a film called *A Warrior's Religion*.

[1350]

On top of media interest from the RCMP, Langara College and high schools to use this film as a prevention tool, one day you may be able to find this documentary in the Legislative Library when the movie is put on DVD. Mani says that if we can save this generation of youth, our future generations will be saved.

As you can see, the youth and gang violence issue is not slowing down. Violent crimes have increased significantly in the last couple of months in many communities on the Lower Mainland. So it's our duty to protect our youth and help bring awareness to our families and communities. I ask you to support this film and get your youth out to watch the showing at Bell Performing Arts Centre on March 18 and 19, with two seatings at 5:15 p.m. and 7:45 p.m.

I understand that at its premiere our Solicitor General also had the opportunity to watch this film and was very impressed. I understand that the Attorney General was also involved. I want to thank everyone who supports this young man. We need to bring this epidemic of violence to an end, and we want to thank Mani for that.

**NOROOZ CELEBRATION**

**K. Whittred:** I rise today to ask every member of this House to join me in celebrating NoRooz. NoRooz is the Persian new year and celebrates the first day of spring. I have a large Persian community within my riding, and I have been honoured over the years to be able to take part in many of the NoRooz celebrations. NoRooz literally means "new day" in Farsi.

The longstanding celebration is marked to bring hope, peace and prosperity. It is celebrated throughout the world in many countries, including Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Pakistan, Iraq, Tajikistan, India and of course Canada. Celebrations begin on the last Wednesday of the year, called Red Wednesday. As a part of cultural celebrations every year, bonfires are lit and people leap over the flames for happiness and enlightenment throughout the coming year on a day called Shar Samba Soree.

Each year this celebration takes place at Ambleside, where hundreds of Iranians gather to celebrate this unique holiday. Every year the event draws more and more partici-

pants. In previous years I've had the privilege of taking part in the celebration, and this year is no exception.

I will also be attending a large Iranian Day festival being held at Mahon Park on March 15. As always, I look forward to the abundance of Persian food, the variety of entertainment and the colourful mixes of culture.

It is always an honour to be part of these festivities and to share in the cultural diversity of my community. I would like to wish everyone that the blessings of the spring bring peace, good health, happiness and prosperity in the year ahead. Please join me in wishing all *NoRooz Mobarak*.

#### JAPANTOWN MULTICULTURAL CELEBRATIONS IN VANCOUVER

**J. Kwan:** The Powell Street Festival Society, the Tonari Gumi, the Vancouver Japanese language school and Japanese Hall, and the Vancouver Moving Theatre will be hosting the Japantown multicultural neighbourhood celebration on Saturday, March 28. The event celebrates the history, diversity and enduring promise of Vancouver's Japantown.

Japantown lies in my constituency on the traditional territory of the Coast Salish First Nation, and it's the site of Vancouver's earliest beginnings. Historically known as Little Tokyo, Japantown is situated between Gore and Dunleavy streets and lies along Powell Street.

The first Japanese immigrants arrived in British Columbia in the 1890s and worked in the local mills and canneries of Vancouver. In 1941 the government began its registration and fingerprinting of all Japanese men and women.

When Japan made its attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, all Japanese males between the age of 18 and 45 were rounded up for resettlement. These enemy aliens, as they were seen then, were forced from their homes and relocated to labour camps. Japanese Canadians were finally given their freedom of citizenship in 1947. The government was forced to recognize them as citizens, and they were given compensation.

The Vancouver Buddhist Church, a landmark for the Japanese community, was built in 1906. The church was seized by the government during World War II but returned to the community after the war.

[1355]

The multicultural celebration has planned activities including storytelling, community displays, performances, a street procession, a ceremony and gala at the Japanese Hall.

With this day of the celebration, the partners move forward on the city of Vancouver's historical and cultural review, commemorates the 80th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between Canada and Japan, and explores Japantown's multicultural past and present.

I ask all members of the House to wish them well and wish Japantown a long and vibrant future in Vancouver-Mount Pleasant.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS IN BURNABY

**H. Bloy:** Every year during Environmental Week Burnaby recognizes community leaders who are leading the way to a greener future. Nominations are now open for the 2009 Environmental Awards in the categories of communications, planning and development, community stewardship, youth, and business stewardship. This year Burnaby has added a new award category — green choices.

The Burnaby environmental awards distinguish outstanding environmental accomplishments of individuals, groups and companies in Burnaby over the past many years. In addition to the environmental awards, people can nominate environmental stars who have significantly contributed to a greener Burnaby over the past year.

Some past winners are.... There are many youth stars in Burnaby: Morgan Balaz-Munn, Melissa Campagne, Frankie Cena, Jomini Chu, Theresa He, Michael Hong, Clark Hsieh, Carol Kwon, Thomas Lee, Alex Ng, Matthew Quon, Greg Von Euw, Stephen Wong, Jie Zheng of Burnaby Mountain Secondary School.

There is Nick Kvenich, a longtime friend of mine and an environmental star. Jennifer Atchinson was also a winner last year of the B.C. achievement award. Burnaby Habitat for Humanity's Restore fit. Greg Von Euw won a youth award when he was just 11 years old. Simon Fraser University Community Trust — Christine Leston of Stony Creek environmental committee. John Thomson has been very active in the community for years, and I also know him personally through scouting.

I urge everyone in Burnaby to nominate their fellow citizens who are working hard to make Burnaby a greener, more environmentally friendly place to live. Nominations close Friday, April 9, 2009, and I'm looking forward to the results in May. Thank you, and good luck to all the nominees.

#### COMMUNITY INFORMATION DIRECTORY FOR NORTH DELTA

**G. Gentner:** Benjamin Disraeli once said that success in life is the man who has the best information. The same can be said about a community. Information about its resources shared throughout will ensure a successful and vibrant community. One of our purposes as an MLA is to share information, opportunity and services to our constituents.

North Delta is an active and thriving community with interconnections among governments, agencies, non-profits and organizations. This multilevel, multifaceted aspect of the community inspired my office to publish a service directory called *The Matrix*, a 22-page booklet of collated information of organizations under such headings as "Community and Culture," "Environment," "Seniors," "Sports and Recreation," along with listings for schools, houses of worship and government services

in North Delta. Over 15,000 were distributed, and I am pleased to say *The Matrix* was well received.

However, efforts have not ended there. Community information is a living document that must constantly be renewed, constantly reviving information. Our office has come up with *The Matrix* appendix that is shared throughout the community.

North Delta and Surrey share one of the longest commercial grids in the province. North Delta businesses within the Scott Road shopping corridor, stretching over 13 kilometres, pay over \$4.3 million in taxes alone. It's these 500 small businesses within North Delta that have been incorporated into *The Matrix* appendix. With the appendix, *The Matrix* now describes where to find services.

*The Matrix* appendix encourages North Delta residents to explore and enjoy businesses' and our community's diversity. Shop local and help ourselves, help our small business, and our communities will thrive. The more we know about our community, the better it will be for everyone. Information is a seed for an idea and only grows when it is watered.

[1400]

### Oral Questions

#### IMPACT OF OLYMPIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN ON SMALL BUSINESS AND WORKERS

**H. Bains:** The Olympic transportation plan released today will affect hundreds of small businesses along the major corridors that will be closed during the Olympics. Can the minister explain why large corporations like Great Canadian Casino and Whistler Mountain are being paid compensation for their Olympic cost but the small businesses and the workers have been cut loose?

**Hon. K. Falcon:** Actually, the transportation plan that was released today is a combination of work by VANOC, the Ministry of Transportation, the community of Vancouver, Whistler, the RCMP. It is a comprehensive plan, it's a coordinated plan, and it's a way that we can ensure that the hundreds of thousands of visitors coming to Vancouver and Whistler can enjoy themselves and see what a great sustainable city we have in Vancouver and Whistler.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member has a supplemental.

**H. Bains:** A \$150 million plan with seven pages of bullets. Is that called a plan?

Yesterday we learned that the taxpayer must subsidize the Olympic cost of Great Canadian Casino, but their workers are left out in the cold. The company is laying off 200 workers for the month of the games. The company's looked after, and the workers lose their jobs.

Again to the minister: it's a simple question. Why the double standard from the B.C. Liberals?

**Hon. K. Falcon:** You know, it is amazing to me the extent to which the NDP will go to try and find anything, something negative about the Olympics. Do you know what's great about this? Actually, if you roll back the tape to 1985, you will see the same negativism about Expo 86. That was the NDP saying it was going to be a big failure. People wouldn't show up. Transportation would be a disaster. It's going to be way over budget. And they were wrong, wrong, wrong — just like they're wrong about the Olympics. It's going to be a great success.

Let me tell you this, Mr. Speaker: 130,000 people a night in downtown Vancouver spending money, having a great time and supporting all the local businesses is good for British Columbia.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Just take your seat, Member. I think there are other people that want to ask questions from the sidelines.

The member has a further supplemental.

**H. Bains:** It's clear that there's one standard for large corporations under this government and another standard for the workers. We know that the owners of Whistler, Cypress Mountain will be compensated for the fact that VANOC needs their mountains for the Olympics.

Can the minister ensure that the workers will keep their jobs during the Olympics? If not, will they be compensated, or are they going to be the victims of this B.C. Liberals double standard too?

**Hon. K. Falcon:** You know, it is amazing. Apparently, according to the NDP, the city of Vancouver has never put on a major event before. Apparently, they forgot about the Celebration of Light, which brings 400,000 people a day. They've apparently forgotten about the Sun Run, the Santa Claus parade. It's actually possible to organize major events and still have an enormous benefit.

I can tell you this, Mr. Speaker. The NDP....

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Take your seat, Minister.  
Members. Members.  
Continue, Minister.

**Hon. K. Falcon:** When the Vancouver Canucks bring home a Stanley Cup, I'm looking forward to the NDP opposing the fact that they're going to have a victory parade in Vancouver. That's the kind of negativism....

[1405]

The fact of the matter is that there will be 130,000 more people a night in downtown Vancouver, partying, buying drinks, buying food, enjoying the atmosphere, spending money, and the NDP will still be trying to figure out how this is negative for the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.

#### LAYOFF OF VANCOUVER WORKERS FOR OLYMPIC GAMES

**S. Simpson:** I assume the Minister of Transportation is answering Olympic questions now instead of the appropriate minister. Maybe it's because he's going to be putting a toll on the Olympics next thing you know.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.  
Take your seat, Member.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.  
Continue, Member.

**S. Simpson:** Well, we didn't get answers from the minister responsible. We didn't get answers from the Minister of Transportation.

Businesses are being compensated in relation to the Olympics. We know it's true with GM Place for usage. We know it's true with Intrawest. We've now heard Great Canadian Casino is going to get compensated as well.

However, workers are on their own — 200 layoffs at the racetrack; 750 people at GM Place, who don't know what the future holds; and 400 more at B.C. Place, who are in limbo at the moment. How come workers are left off the list while businesses are taken care of?

Will the Minister Responsible for the Olympics stand up and acknowledge today that this government will pay at least as much attention to the workers as they do to their business friends?

**Hon. C. Hansen:** I would like to have seen an NDP government in the late 1990s care about the 50,000 workers from British Columbia who had to go to other provinces to find jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that this is a government that cares about the workers who are coming into British Columbia — a net increase of over 50,000 workers who have come from other provinces to get jobs here in the last four years.

The Olympics are one of the biggest job generators this province has ever seen. In fact, we know that the transportation plan alone is going to generate about 250 jobs in British Columbia during the time of the Olympic

Games. So I think it's a little rich, as I mentioned yesterday, that this member who opposed the creation of those jobs at Hastings Park is now trying to pretend that somehow he's their great defender.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member has a supplemental.

**S. Simpson:** The 68,000 or so people who lost their jobs in January will be waiting to see if this government does anything for them. It's workers, people who collect a paycheque, who are being hurt by this. It's small business people who are getting no support from this government, and now there may be more.

How many more workers are going to join this list? How many more small businesses are going to be in a crunch? Will this minister stand up and tell us today: are the ski hill workers at Cypress and Whistler going to lose their jobs for the period of the Olympics?

**Hon. C. Hansen:** In my enthusiasm in my last response, I actually misstated. It's not 250 jobs. It's 2,500 jobs actually being created as a result of.... But Mr. Speaker....

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Take your seat for a second.  
Minister, continue.

**Hon. C. Hansen:** Again, it's a little rich to hear this member try to pretend he's the defender of small business in British Columbia when that party has a policy that's actually going to ratchet up the cost to small business in British Columbia by about \$480 million a year. That's the kind of damage that the small business community is more concerned about.

I can tell you that the small business community in B.C. is celebrating the Olympics. They know it's a big economic stimulus to this province, and they know that there are going to be huge beneficiaries from this in just about every corner of the province.

[1410]

#### IMPACT OF OLYMPIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN ON SMALL BUSINESS AND WORKERS

**M. Karagianis:** This transportation plan is two months late. It's about 80 percent complete, seven pages of bullet points and a few maps. But what was it the minister called it — a comprehensive plan? Not at all, not likely.

It's clear that there are going to be major impacts on taxpayers, businesses, workers, students — impacts that aren't even mentioned in this little seven-page plan. Once again the government has shown that they are not the least bit concerned about average citizens. Downtown Vancouver streets will see streets closed, parking gone.

Can the Minister Responsible for the Olympics explain why there has been no study done on the impact on small business and a mitigation plan for them?

**Hon. K. Falcon:** I would remind the member opposite that the International Olympic Committee described VANOC and the organization as the best-organized Olympics ever.

I get that the NDP spend virtually no time ever talking to small business. That's why they don't ever support the NDP. But I'll tell you this. The small business community is thrilled about the opportunities the Olympics are bringing to Vancouver — 130,000 people every night in downtown Vancouver spending money. That's tips. That's benefits. That's jobs. And that's something the NDP has never understood. That's why they oppose major projects like Expo and the Olympics, and that is a shame.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member has a supplemental.

**M. Karagianis:** Well, the IOC certainly doesn't care about small business in this community, and neither does that side of the House.

This plan is so full of holes. Let's look at an example. The municipality of Whistler says that they are still in discussion with the government and VANOC about funding for transit and emergency services, including the costs for increased traffic accidents. Will the minister admit today that this Olympic transportation plan means additional costs to the province, to local government, to the taxpayers of this province — more costs on the backs of taxpayers?

**Hon. K. Falcon:** What the Minister of Transportation will tell the opposition Transportation critic is that Vancouver and Whistler are going to be a model for sustainability, a model for a community that has a heavy emphasis on walking and cycling and public transit. That is what the world is going to see when they come to Vancouver.

I'll tell you this. The additional buses, the additional SkyTrain cars, the additional benefits that the world is going to see as they visit the Lower Mainland are all part of a transit plan the Premier announced back in January that's adding more buses, more SkyTrains, more public transit options for all the people of British Columbia.

#### ROLE OF PATRICK KINSELLA IN B.C. RAIL SALE

**L. Krog:** Yesterday, if the Premier wasn't already aware of it, he was made aware that his friend Patrick Kinsella and his companies — the former co-chair of two Liberal campaigns — received \$297,000 of taxpayers' money from B.C. Rail. My question to the Premier is quite simple. What services did Mr. Kinsella and his companies provide for \$297,000?

**Hon. W. Oppal:** Obviously, this matter arises out of those issues that are now before the Supreme Court in the B.C. Rail dispute. In the circumstances, I'm not going to comment on it.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member has a supplemental.

**L. Krog:** I want to remind the member from Point Grey that he's not just an ordinary member of this assembly. He's the Premier of Her Majesty's government. He is the leader of the B.C. Liberal Party. And he promised...

[1415]

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.  
Member, just take your seat.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.  
Continue, Member.

**L. Krog:** ...that he would have the most open and transparent government in British Columbia ever.

My question is to the Premier. He has been asked. He's had a day to find out. It is his duty. Tell this House today: what did his friend Mr. Kinsella do for \$297,000?

**Hon. W. Oppal:** If that member has any evidence of wrongdoing, he should take it to the...

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members. Members.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** ...appropriate authorities.

**J. Horgan:** My question is to the Premier, who ran in the 2001 election claiming to want to preside over the most open and transparent and honest government in North America. I'm wanting to know....

Interjections.

**J. Horgan:** Wow. Wow. Too much pixie dust. Too much pixie dust.  
I wanted....

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Just take your seat.

**J. Horgan:** I wanted....

**Mr. Speaker:** No, Member.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members. Members.

Member for Victoria-Hillside, withdraw that remark unequivocally, please.

**R. Fleming:** I will withdraw the remark, and my heckle should have said that the B.C. Liberals...

**Mr. Speaker:** Member.

**R. Fleming:** ...betrayed their promise on B.C. Rail.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member.  
Continue, Member.

**J. Horgan:** My question is a simple one to the Premier of the most so-called open government in British Columbia's history. How can it be that a close personal friend and campaign manager can get \$300,000 from the government of B.C. and we're not allowed to know what he did? Can the Premier please explain to me, my constituents, everyone in this place how it's possible that it's none of our damn business?

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** Right now there's a trial proceeding in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, and in the circumstances, it would be improper for anyone in this House to comment on any matter that arises either directly or indirectly from that trial.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member has a supplemental.

**J. Horgan:** Audited financial statements from a Crown agency — formerly a Crown agency — B.C. Rail: proceeds to Progressive Holdings, Progressive Group, The Progressive Group — \$297,000.

This is not before the courts, to the best of my knowledge. Mr. Kinsella, to the best of our knowledge, is not before the courts. This document was tabled in this Legislature. Will the Premier tell us why his pal got \$300,000? Did he write a memo? Did he send an e-mail? Did he say that everything was fine? Is the train running on time? What the heck did he do?

**Hon. W. Oppal:** My answer is the same. The question is the same.

[1420]

**M. Farnworth:** Well, the Attorney General won't answer, in part because he wasn't here. He stated a few moments ago that people should ask the appropriate

authorities. Well, guess what. The Premier was here. The Premier is the appropriate authority, and he knows the answer as to why Patrick Kinsella was given a \$300,000 untendered contract.

Our question is very simple. To the Premier: why was Mr. Patrick Kinsella given a \$300,000 contract? What did he do for that \$300,000, and why won't you tell this House and the public of British Columbia what he got that money for?

**Hon. W. Oppal:** Well, that was the same question, except with a lot more bombast. So my answer is the same. I'm not going to comment on it.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.  
Continue, Member.

**M. Farnworth:** And that answer was the same answer with the same lack of transparency, the same lack of accountability and the same lack of openness which this Premier said he would always provide to the people of British Columbia. He clearly won't answer it in this House. He won't answer it in the hallway. What is the Premier afraid of? What has he got to hide? Where did that \$300,000 go, and what did he get for it?

**Hon. W. Oppal:** I don't think this side of the House needs any advice on accountability from a group of people...

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Just take your seat. Sit down.  
Members.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** ...who brought us Bingogate and Casinogate.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.

**R. Fleming:** Even an untendered contract that broke all the rules in how it was awarded still has documentation behind it, and that's what we're asking about today — \$300,000 awarded to the campaign chairman of the governing party, a personal friend of the Premier. We want answers.

What did he do for B.C. Rail? What did the taxpayers of British Columbia get to put him on the payroll — the party leader on the payroll? Will the Premier stand up in this House and tell us exactly what Mr. Kinsella did for his 300 grand?

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.

Attorney, just take your seat. I understand we have a lot of other members that just want to ask questions back and forth first.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** This question and the previous questions all arise out of the same set of circumstances, the same event that is now being tried in the Supreme Court of British Columbia, and I will not comment on that.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member has a supplemental.

**R. Fleming:** The question is very simple. The parliamentary library documents contracts between 2002 and 2005 that total \$300,000 for Mr. Patrick Kinsella, who co-chaired the Liberals' 2001 and 2005 election campaign.

[1425]

It's a very legitimate question to be asking the government, now that it's exposed, to provide details on what he was hired by B.C. Rail to do, because he wrote the platform for the governing party that said that it wouldn't privatize B.C. Rail, and then he got the best of both worlds. He came in, in 2002 and started getting on the payroll and made 300 grand, presumably to advise on exactly how to privatize B.C. Rail.

So tell the taxpayers of British Columbia exactly what Mr. Kinsella was on the payroll to do and what he was paid for.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** There are people who are before the Supreme Court, charged with some serious offences, and when comments of that sort are made, we take every chance here of jeopardizing a right to a fair trial.

**B. Ralston:** The question is a very simple one. To the Premier: what did Mr. Kinsella do for \$300,000? The public of British Columbia is entitled to know the answer to that question.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** The answer is the same. It's before the court. I will not answer it.

**Mr. Speaker:** The member has a supplemental.

**B. Ralston:** Perhaps the Minister of Transportation might care to answer this question. Can he explain what Mr. Patrick Kinsella did for \$300,000?

**Hon. W. Oppal:** I'm sure that and other questions will be answered at the trial.

**S. Herbert:** Well, on this matter I heard the Minister of Transportation say: "Oh, well, that document is public." You're damn right it's public, and that's why we demand an answer.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.

First of all, Member, choose your words a little bit more carefully.

Continue.

**S. Herbert:** What I want to know, what my colleagues want to know and what the people of British Columbia want to know is: what did Patrick Kinsella, a key adviser of this Premier, do for \$300,000 of their money?

**Hon. W. Oppal:** Let me give that member a bit of a lesson on separation of powers.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members, we're not going to continue. Members.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** Our system operates under principles of independence. The Legislature is separate and independent from the executive. The executive is independent from the judiciary. Each body does not intervene or comment upon the activities of another body. That's what the principle of independence means.

While that member obviously doesn't appreciate these long-hallowed principles, I want to remind him that any comments that we make here can have unfair repercussions on the fairness of the trial process.

**Mr. Speaker:** Member has a supplemental.

[1430]

**S. Herbert:** I think the only lesson we're getting here today is that this government deserves an F in accountability, an F in openness and an F for standing up for the people of B.C.

It's a basic question. A Crown corporation — where it shows very clearly that this man, Patrick Kinsella, the key adviser to the Premier and personal friend, took \$300,000 of the taxpayers' money. Taxpayers deserve an answer for how that money was spent from their Premier. Will the Premier answer this question now, finally?

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** Let me read a quote from the member for Nanaimo made on November 2, '06.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** He might learn something.

Interjections.

**Mr. Speaker:** Members.  
Continue, Attorney.

**Hon. W. Oppal:** "It is essential to the rule of law that the integrity of the judicial process not be interfered with. High-profile prosecutions have failed in the past because politicians felt compelled to make comments in public that were later deemed prejudicial." That's the member for Nanaimo.

[End of question period.]

**R. Lee:** I ask leave to do an introduction.

**Mr. Speaker:** Proceed.

#### Introductions by Members

**R. Lee:** Joining us today in the gallery are 28 grade 7 students from Westridge Elementary in my riding. They are joined by their teachers Mrs. Pritchard and Mr. Austin, and Miss Cho, a student teacher from SFU. Will the House please join me in making them feel very welcome.

#### Orders of the Day

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I call committee stage of Bill 4.

#### Committee of the Whole House

#### MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BASES ACT, 2008-2009

The House in Committee of the Whole on Bill 4; K. Whittred in the chair.

The committee met at 2:34 p.m.

On section 1.

**B. Ralston:** I just want to confirm that in this section that's set out, ten separate ministers.... They are the only, if I can put it this way, beneficiaries of the legislation, in the sense that they will be receiving that 10 percent holdback of their ministerial pay. It applies

to these ten ministers only, and that's why they're set out in section 1.

**Hon. M. de Jong:** The hon. member is correct that this determines that the legislation is relative to ten ministers. It does not, however, guarantee anything for those ministers. Obviously, it alters the base, but there are other intervening factors that could be taken into account. The legislation does apply to the ten ministries listed here.

[1435]

**B. Ralston:** I'm referring, in the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act, to the payment of the holdback for achieving individual responsibilities. That's section 5. So I'm presuming that I'm not speaking of the holdback for achieving collective responsibilities, but does this not apply to section 5? I believe that in section 2, which we'll deal with shortly, it refers to section 5 and section 6 of the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act. I had understood that those are the sections that it referred to.

**Hon. M. de Jong:** That's correct, but it still doesn't guarantee. The final accounting needs to be done to ensure that the ministry numbers have come in, in compliance with the adjusted numbers.

**B. Ralston:** What this bill does is adjust the voted estimates to include the supplementary estimates which, in the case of these individual ministries, we debated not so long ago. I believe it was last week, although some of the days are beginning to blur together. So what else remains to be done?

I'm assuming that, given that it's March 11, we're 20 days from the close of the fiscal year. Is the minister anticipating there's some unforeseen turn of events that would lead to those projections not being realized?

We're very, very close to the end of the fiscal year. Unless there's an unexpected spurt of spending out of the main estimates — which we are assured is under control and indeed reduced to essentials by the Minister of Finance, and we've just voted on the supplementary estimates, which were a fixed amount — I'm not sure why the minister feels the need to be quite so Delphic on this point.

**Hon. M. de Jong:** Only because the deed is not done until the audits have taken place and the public accounts have been reported upon.

**B. Ralston:** I would say, in terms of the probability of the ministers achieving this, that.... Would the minister agree that it's a high probability that the main estimates, which were passed in the budget last spring, and the supplementary estimates...? The combination of those two is very likely. There's a high probability that it's very likely to determine the spending in individual ministries.

Is there some concern on the revenue side as we approach March 31 that leads the minister to want to hedge his bets and suggest that in individual ministries — because the revenue is cascading downwards, notwithstanding what the Minister of Finance has said — individual ministers may exceed the spending allocated for their individual ministries?

**Hon. M. de Jong:** On the individual side, this is purely about expenditures. We obviously aim to hit the targets. If this helps the member, I am not aware of any circumstances that would lead me to conclude or alert the member to that not taking place. His characterization of it as being likely is therefore, from my perspective, accurate.

Section 1 approved.

On section 2.

**B. Ralston:** I just want to briefly address the method by which the holdback that's referred to.... In section 2 it refers to sections 5(1) and 6(1) of the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act. In section 5 it refers to the payment of half the holdback for achieving individual responsibilities.

The way in which this is calculated is on the basis of the pay that's set out in the Members' Remuneration and Pensions Act. My calculation is that an individual cabinet minister receives approximately, if my calculations are correct, \$151,820 a year for their duties.

[1440]

The ministerial portion of that is \$50,820 approximately. The ministers receive 50 percent more than an ordinary MLA gets. An ordinary MLA is approximately \$101,000 when cost of living increases are taken into account.

I just want to ascertain that this individual holdback on that amount of \$50,820 is \$5,082, if I've calculated correctly, and that's the holdback for achieving individual responsibilities that we're talking about. That applies to each of these ministers.

The sum total that this bill is directed to is \$5,082 times ten — just over \$50,000. The entire machinery of the Legislature, the introduction of the bill, the advice from the Clerk, the formal debate here.... What we are debating in dollar amounts is just over \$50,000.

I just want to make that point. If the minister would be so kind as to acknowledge that my calculations are correct or are approximately correct, and we're talking about the sum of approximately \$51,000.

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I'm not in a position to verify the member's math, but insofar as I think he did calculations based on the ministerial stipend — the ministerial portion of the salary that ministers of the Crown receive — and applied the holdback calculations to that portion, he is correct.

**B. Ralston:** So if I am correct, and I think I am, the pay of an ordinary MLA has just approached approximately \$100,000. The ministerial pay is half of that, which is \$50,000. The holdback of 10 percent is calculated on that \$50,000, so it's about \$5,000. So ten ministers — \$50,000. Would the minister agree that this bill concerns and is about paying the sum of \$50,000 — \$5,000 to ten ministers? That's what we're debating here?

**Hon. M. de Jong:** Well, the bill is about accountability and about obliging the government to present to this House in a regularized and open way the numbers and that which follows from supplementary estimates. The member has done a calculation as to what it represents on an individualized basis for the ministers involved.

I'm not going to quarrel with the math, but I've also tried to be fair about saying that at the end of the day, it requires verification by the audits that are done and, finally, the publication of the public accounts before any minister receives any of the holdback that is taken through the course of the year.

**B. Ralston:** In section 2(d)(ii) it refers to the Minister of Forests and Range and "the amount of any expenses incurred by that minister for that fiscal year under the authority of section 65...." I just wanted to confirm that that was the \$112 million that was spoken of, I believe, in the supplementary estimates for fire suppression throughout the province.

[1445]

**Hon. M. de Jong:** Apologies to the member and the House for the delay, but I just wanted to make sure I got this correct.

I think the member referenced the supplementary estimates. He may recall that for the statutory appropriation that is concerned relative to fire suppression, there isn't in fact a separate supplementary estimate vote. I am, however, advised that the amount that was spent in excess of the calculated amount for the '08-09 fiscal year for protection — for fire suppression — was \$26 million.

**B. Ralston:** I thank the minister for that response.

In subsection (2) of section 2 that we're referring to now, it refers to the operation of section 6(1.1) of the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act. How might that come into play in this particular set of estimated amounts?

I had understood that the estimates reflected that revision of ministerial responsibilities, and this appears to refer to further revisions in the event of government reorganization. Can the minister explain how that might come into effect? Is this simply a "covering all possibilities" type of provision, or is there some actual intended purpose in this particular fiscal year?

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I just want to verify that we are talking about section 2(2), which begins with the phrase "nothing in subsection (1)...."

Interjection.

**Hon. M. de Jong:** This is a provision that is included in the unlikely event that there were to be a government reorganization in the course of the next 20 days — which, again, I am not anticipating.

**B. Ralston:** I thank the minister for that response.

Just to close on this section, would the minister agree — or is he prepared to reflect — that given the dollar amounts that are involved of approximately \$50,000 for ten ministers, engaging the formal mechanisms of the Legislature for that sum may not be the most cost-efficient way to achieve the professed goals of this legislation?

Is the minister prepared — he may not be, and I appreciate that — to reflect if there's perhaps a less cumbersome way of achieving the goal of ministerial accountability without the necessity of a formal bill and all that it implies in terms of time and cost — and for, I think, a very, very small sum?

[1450]

**Hon. M. de Jong:** Well, I will respect conclusions and opinions that the hon. member and others may have about this. I have heard arguments that in cases where supplementary estimates are called to authorize expenditures of unanticipated surplus funds, this may not be the originally intended purpose for which the law was created.

That is something I'm sure this member will be reflecting upon and actually something that the government may be reflecting upon. It is helpful to know the member's views on the matter.

Section 2 approved.

On section 3.

**B. Ralston:** Can the minister simply advise, when it refers to the public statement of the revised information that would be made under section 6 of the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act, when in the calendar we might expect that to be made?

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I'm sorry. I think the member is looking for a date, but I didn't quite catch the date relative to what portion of the section.

**B. Ralston:** Perhaps I'm misreading the section. Although he anticipates little change is likely in the 20 days prior to the end of the fiscal year, I'm just wondering: at which point in the calendar year will it become public whether or not ministers have achieved

the individual responsibility that's set out in this act and in the companion act, the Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act? When will the public be advised whether ministers have achieved those targets or not?

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I think I understand the member's question. The answer isn't definitively available until the public accounts are tabled. My recollection is that it happens in late June or beginning of July. There is a separate report attached to the tabling of the public accounts at that time.

Sections 3 and 4 approved.

Title approved.

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I move the committee rise and report the bill complete without amendment.

Motion approved.

The committee rose at 2:54 p.m.

The House resumed; Mr. Speaker in the chair.

### Report and Third Reading of Bills

#### MINISTERIAL ACCOUNTABILITY BASES ACT, 2008-2009

Bill 4, Ministerial Accountability Bases Act, 2008-2009, reported complete without amendment, read a third time and passed.

**Hon. M. de Jong:** I call second reading debate of Bill 8, Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2009, to be preceded by a very brief recess if that's agreeable.

**Mr. Speaker:** Hon. Members, the House stands in recess until three o'clock.

The House recessed from 2:55 p.m. to 2:56 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

### Second Reading of Bills

#### WORKERS COMPENSATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

**Hon. I. Black:** I move that Bill 8 be now read for a second time.

When picturing firefighters and the dangers that they encounter, most people don't think about cancer, the

cancer risks, even though cancer is a very real danger in firefighters' lives.

Today in the interests of British Columbia's professional firefighters and their families, I would like to present legislation that will ensure that professional firefighters who are non-smokers and are diagnosed with lung cancer will not have to prove that their disease is related to their work. The automatic presumption will be that their lung cancer is related to their firefighting activities. The occupational disease presumption is limited to firefighters who are non-smokers because of the clear medical links between smoking and lung cancer.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

In 2007 the Professional Fire Fighters Association asked government to add lung cancer to the list of diseases presumed to be related to employment as a firefighter.

Madam Speaker, I have to comment that working with the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association over the last year as minister and before that as MLA has been an extraordinarily impressive experience. The B.C. Professional Fire Fighters have been very articulate, highly professional and ready to work with us in explaining what it is that they view that they need. They have been more than willing to do their part to help us accomplish what is needed for the families of British Columbia's firefighters.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge Michael Hurley, president of the B.C. Fire Fighters Association; Larry Thomas, their secretary-treasurer; Richard Melnyk, the VP from the Kootenays; Jay Brownlee from the Lower Mainland; Reid Wharton, the VP from the Island region; John Iverson, vice-president of the northern region; and Larry Hollier, vice-president of the Okanagan region.

When we had the firefighters here the other day, I had the pleasure of bringing this exciting news closer to home as well. I spent some important time meeting and learning of the current issues of the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association with some of the firefighters that serve my constituency in Port Moody–Westwood, specifically Rob Suzukovich from Port Moody, Mike Shelfley, Dave Piffer, Jason Miller from Coquitlam, Spencer Hughes, Ben McCulloch, Steve Piccolo and Mac Sullivan, also from the Coquitlam Fire Fighters Association.

It was in May 2008 at the B.C. Fire Fighters Association convention that government announced changing the Workers Compensation Act to add lung cancer to existing presumptions for brain cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, colorectal cancer, ureter cancer, testicular cancer, non-Hodgkins lymphoma and leukemia. Those cancers and the presumption element associated with them were put forward and passed by our government in 2005, again working with the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association.

As with existing presumptions for other cancers, lung cancer will apply to professional and volunteer firefighters who are primarily assigned to fire suppression duties for a minimum period of time and who are regularly exposed to the hazards of a fire scene, other than a forest fire scene, throughout that minimum period.

It establishes that if a qualifying firefighter contracts primary site lung cancer, the Workers Compensation Board, WorkSafe B.C., must presume that it was caused by the worker's employment as a firefighter unless the contrary is proved. This presumption means that firefighters will be eligible for workers' compensation benefits without having to provide scientific and medical evidence that the cancer was caused by their work in their specific situation.

This legislative amendment will apply to qualifying firefighters diagnosed with lung cancer since May 27, 2008, when this presumption was first announced.

[1500]

British Columbia is a leader in recognizing presumptive occupational diseases associated with long-term employment as a firefighter, and I am very proud to propose even further protection for the men and women who help keep our communities safe.

I move second reading of the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2009.

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

**Deputy Speaker:** Proceed, Member.

#### Introductions by Members

**J. Nuraney:** We have in the gallery today students from grade 5 from the Maywood Community School in Burnaby, a school that I have great admiration for. The work that they do truly is commendable. Not only do they teach the students, but they reach out to the parents of the students and make them feel part of the community. I think the work that the school does and the principal and the teachers are truly commendable.

In the gallery with us, present with the students, is Sue Montebello, the principal, an absolutely amazing lady who does great work in Burnaby and for the school. We have David Kelsey, the teacher. We have Brenda Hain, a librarian. We have Heidi Canavese, a staff member. And Mrs. Fatima, one of the parents, has also accompanied the children here today. I would like the House to please join me in making them feel very welcome.

#### Debate Continued

**K. Conroy:** We rise, too, on this side of the House to support this legislation. I'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the firefighters from my area, Richard Melnyk and Lee Depellegrin, who I met with this week.

We've all been meeting with our firefighters this week, and we've all been very impressed by the excellent briefing that they presented to us, the issues that they talked about and the fact that this legislation is very near and dear to their hearts. We talked about other issues, but this was one that was very near and dear to their hearts. I want to thank the firefighters for their commitment to their profession, to the people that they work with and to their communities — for the job they do.

As the minister has said, this bill does amend the Workers Compensation Act to recognize primary site lung cancer in non-smokers as a disease linked to the occupation of firefighting. We know that the B.C. Fire Fighters Association has repeatedly asked the provincial government to expand the list of recognized cancers, and this was one of the cancers that they had asked should be expanded, to be recognized. In other areas one that they talked about was esophageal cancer.

There is growing scientific evidence of the strong relationship between the different cancers and the occupation of a firefighter, and I think the fact that lung cancer for non-smokers is being recognized today is one that firefighters are indeed glad about. While we do support this, we also want to talk a little bit about the history of support to firefighters and their recognition of the occupational disease presumption.

I want to just talk about when this record started in this House — just a bit of history for members. I want to talk about how it did, in fact, start February 15, 2005, when former Member Joy MacPhail tabled a motion calling for amendments to the Workers Compensation Act that would create an occupational disease presumption for firefighters.

I'd like to read that motion for the record: "Ms. MacPhail to move that this House recommend to the government that it introduce an amendment to the Workers Compensation Act to ensure that the following injuries be deemed to have been due to the nature of the work of firefighters unless proven otherwise on a case-by-case basis" — and they're listed — "primary site bladder cancer, primary site kidney cancer, primary site colon cancer, multiple myeloma, primary site brain cancer, primary site lung cancer in a non-smoker, primary site testicular cancer, leukemia or non-Hodgkin's lymphoma."

[1505]

Of those nine diseases that have been listed here, those nine types of cancer, eight of them will now be recognized after passage of this bill, and this was recommended back in February of 2005. So I wanted to make sure that that was on the record as a bit of history for members — that it was actually Joy MacPhail who originally brought these recommendations forward to the House.

Also, I'd like to recognize the great work of the member for New Westminster, who on October 31, 2005, when this bill — it was Bill 11 — was introduced, when the original seven cancers were recognized.... At committee

stage, the member for New Westminster introduced an amendment that would have at that time added primary site lung cancer to the list of cancers. Unfortunately, this did not receive the support of the House at that time in 2005, but I think it is important to recognize that that was how the opposition was thinking ahead, showing support for the firefighters and the fact that they should be supported in the work they do.

But again, I want to say today that we do recognize the importance of the addition of lung cancer for non-smokers, for firefighters. We do definitely support this bill.

However, we'd like to put on the record that we also support the firefighters' requests for esophageal cancer. They presented that in the brief, and it's unfortunately not in the text of the bill. We, in fact, had a motion on the floor that would have recognized that, and it is unfortunate that the government couldn't have seen in its wisdom to include esophageal cancer with this very bill.

Again, we support the lung cancer for non-smokers. It's just unfortunate that the workers compensation coverage couldn't be extended to esophageal cancer also. This was raised, actually, back in 2008 by our former critic and member for New Westminster.

So again, I'd like to say that we are definitely on the record for supporting the firefighters in their efforts to ensure that they have the proper compensation for the very, very important job they do. I'd like to thank the firefighters for the work they do, for the excellent briefing they prepared for all caucus members on both sides of the House, and for their commitment to their communities and the work that they do.

**H. Bloy:** I stand up to support this bill. You know, I couldn't imagine what a day in the life of a firefighter would entail and just what firefighters do each day in all of our communities around British Columbia. I know that they fight more than fires. They do so much for our community.

But before I start on my remarks, I really have to correct the history lesson from the member across the way. She claimed that Joy MacPhail stood up and made a motion in the House in 2005 in February. I can tell you that the firefighters, the professional firefighters of British Columbia, had been going to the government of the day in the '90s for years to make changes. For her to bring Joy MacPhail up when Joy MacPhail cancelled a number of items that firefighters were entitled to....

It's in fact in 2003 that we sent it to the Workers Compensation Board to review those nine cancers. In reviewing those nine cancers, we came up in 2005 with our recommendation of seven at the time. We had been working with the professional firefighters every year. That is the story of how it happened, not what didn't happen.

Firefighters are invaluable resources to our communities and the contribution that they make by themselves, their friends and their families.... The Burn Fund is a

great example where firefighters go above and beyond, dedicating their time to support burn survivors, to raise public awareness. For over 30 years moneys raised for the fund have supported programs such as burn awareness, research prevention programs, helped hospitals like Vancouver General and B.C.'s Children's Hospital.

There are more than 3,600 professional firefighters in 50 communities around B.C. and the Yukon. We as a government have demonstrated our commitment to firefighters throughout the years.

In 2003 the government asked the Workers Compensation Board to review a request from the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association that firefighters developing certain cancers be presumed to be contracted through their work. In 2005 our government amended the Workers Compensation Act to recognize firefighters' cancer risk for seven cancers.

[1510]

I can be proud to say that the official announcement was made at the Firefighters' Club in Burnaby. It was made by the former cabinet minister, hon. Patty Sahota. I was there with my colleague from Burnaby-Willingdon, and we made the announcement for the seven presumptions. In 2005 we extended that to include part-time, paid, on-call and volunteer firefighters.

In 2007 government ensured that seasonal forest fire fighters working for the B.C. public service were eligible to receive full medical and extended medical benefits. In 2007 the government granted \$2 million towards accommodations in the Burn Fund building.

In 2008 the government granted \$2 million in the Burn Fund building to support education and research. In 2008 government added testicular cancer to the list of occupational diseases for firefighters, bringing the number up to eight. In 2008 the government also announced planned changes through legislation in 2009 to add lung cancer to its list, and I am proud to say that's what we're here to do today.

I want to thank all professional firefighters for their strength and determination on staying on this file for so many years. I was pleased that we were able to work with so many great firefighters, and I want to thank them for bringing these to government and coming back each year with clear and articulated requests that we have been able to work on.

In 2003 when we first spoke to firefighters — or not the first time; for two years since we were elected — from Burnaby there were two firefighters that were here on a regular basis: Joe Robertson and John McQuay.

And then this year, for the past few years, we have four firefighters from Burnaby that have actively worked on file. We have Randy Delmonico, Rob Lemieux, Miles Ritchie and Mike Hurley, who is president of the Burnaby Professional Firefighters. He's also the British Columbia president of the professional firefighters.

I truly want to thank the firefighters for what they do in their community, for what they bring to us, and I truly want to thank them for staying determined from the '90s and for their partnership in the work that they did with our government to get to where we're at today.

I am proud of all firefighters in British Columbia, and I support this bill.

**C. Puchmayr:** As I was heading over to the House today, I was not aware that this matter was coming forward until I arrived. It's an interesting coincidence, and I thought I would take the opportunity to rise here in the House.

As you're aware, I have been absent some time, overcoming a liver transplant, and I will do my best to stay focused and not to get too angry with the member across the way who, I think, is attempting to elevate this to a different level. I'm going to keep the discussion at a reasonable level, a sensible level.

I think we can all agree that the firefighters that we have in our community, that we have throughout the province do a very difficult job, and they do put their lives on the line, literally, every day that they come to work. I think that the fact that this was recognized going back to February 15 of 2005, when Joy MacPhail did introduce a member's motion bringing in nine of the cancers that we have today ...

That's the first time it shows up on the paper. Certainly, I was very pleased, as the new Labour critic in 2005, right after being elected, when the then Labour Minister, the Minister of Aboriginal Reconciliation, brought the legislation forward to provide presumption of cancer legislation to career firefighters in the province of British Columbia. It was certainly a step that templated the original NDP motion, and certainly, this side was very supportive of it.

We also put forward some amendments with respect to adding other forms of cancer, including non-smokers lung cancer, which we are dealing with here today.

[1515]

Back in the fall of 2005 when the first legislation came in, we were already at today's date with the sciences, and the sciences haven't changed all across North America. The facts are very clear that cancer is very common. Primary site lung cancer in non-smokers who are firefighters has an extremely high weight of probability, that it is causative to the relationship to their job, especially if you are primarily in suppression and, therefore, should qualify as one of the presumptions.

That hasn't changed since we made the amendment in the fall of 2005, and therefore, I do have some concerns with the fact that it's being introduced today when there are surely members in the province that may have succumbed to lung cancer since the fall of '05 and members who may still be battling with lung cancer today and that may not qualify for the short period of retroactivity that

is being allowed in this bill. So we will probably be dealing with that in committee stage. But again, it shows that we are moving forward.

It's unfortunate that it had to take the eve of a provincial election and a day after the firefighters lobby for this to go forward, but nevertheless, we are appreciative that the legislation has come forward.

We know that it is the fruition of hard work certainly on this side and certainly of the Professional Fire Fighters Association and the hundreds of thousands of dollars of their dues that they have spent in hiring the specialists and hiring the doctors and the scientists to quantify what they've known for many, many years, just by virtue of the mortality rate of firefighters to lung cancer and to other cancers. They have worked extremely hard in achieving that recognition. Fortunately, we are here today again expanding on the presumption-of-cancer legislation.

Last November I attended a funeral of a firefighter. I grew up in the same neighbourhood. We hung out at the same places. I didn't know him that well when I was young. I was actually quite shocked when I heard that he had passed away from esophageal cancer. Esophageal cancer is another cancer that we have been asking the government to put on the list. The sciences are there. Ontario is engaged. Ontario has the legislation. Last time I spoke on this in question period in November of 2008, Manitoba was in the process and may very well be on the books today.

Esophageal cancer is also the first.... The opposition introduced the amendment to the original legislation to add volunteer firefighters to the equation of the presumption of cancer. The first firefighter that was a volunteer firefighter that passed away of cancer — immediately after the legislation — was a captain in northern Vancouver Island. He unfortunately died of esophageal cancer.

I was working with some of the volunteer firefighter lobbyists who were then trying to promote esophageal cancer as one of the identified cancers. That hasn't happened, and it's unfortunate that it isn't coming forward in this bill. We have introduced a private member's motion through the new Labour critic, and it is still on the books. We're hoping that certainly when we're in government next May we will be introducing that legislation to this House.

What's really sad about the test for compensation for cancer.... I'll give you an example with firefighter Captain Glendinning. Here's an interesting test. Captain Glendinning passed away after 31 years of service. His friend Deputy Chief John Watt succumbed just months before him. They were hired at the same time. They fought some of the same fires side by side. They were exposed to the same toxins and the same chemicals, and one was awarded a presumption designation — not a presumption designation, but one was awarded a designation of work-related.

Even though he had been retired, he still died on duty and certainly received a different type of recognition. There was quite a ceremony that firefighters from all over North America and across Canada came to attend because it was a line-of-duty fatality.

You know, his good friend, who he worked with for all those same years and fought those same fires with.... His diagnosis from WorkSafe was different, and they denied his rights to a compensable case. He didn't die in the line of duty. He died just of esophageal cancer.

That's why we made that resolution, that's why we made that motion, and that's why we're going to bring in that bill — so that that injustice will not happen again in the province of British Columbia after the May election.

Now, with the lung cancer, which we're dealing with here today.... The legislation will pass. I guarantee you that. This side will guarantee you that. The legislation will pass. Primary lung cancer, non-smoker will pass. There will be an automatic presumption if you're a non-smoker and you're primarily in suppression and you have a diagnosis of lung cancer.

Again, it saddens me that we have firefighters today that are diagnosed, but they were diagnosed before the government agreed that the science is acceptable. Yet they're still diagnosed. They still have lung cancer. They may still lose their lives — in my opinion, in the line of duty — but according to the government's reluctance to bring this forward earlier, they will not be categorized as dying in the line of duty, and they will merely go without being compensated. That's sad.

It would be good if the minister takes note of these and we look at the issue, maybe, during committee stage and look at the issue with respect to the retroactivity of this.

With those comments, Madam Speaker, it was a pleasure to rise in here again. Hopefully, I will have one more opportunity, maybe tomorrow. With that, I will take my seat.

**J. Nurany:** I will certainly resist the temptation, but I want to stay focused on the record of this government.

I was elected in 2001, and since that time, I remember that we have had representations from the firefighters to come and talk to us about the presumptions and what it is they would like to have the act amended to, or the Workers Compensation Act expanded to, to cover certain presumptions.

I think that effort was made very honourably by the members of the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters. I have been in contact with those firefighters since 2001, until two days ago, when they again visited us and talked to us about the possibilities of expanding the list of presumptions.

What we've got today in this bill is the presumption of lung cancer, and I think it is important that we keep studying the occupational hazards that the firefighters go through on a day-to-day basis as they fight fires in our community.

We had a fire, unfortunately, in Burnaby a couple of weeks ago in an apartment building on Smith Street. Once again, the firefighters in Burnaby rose up to the challenge and came and helped and reduced the fatalities in that incident.

I think we not only need to recommend the work that they do and commend them for the work that they do in terms of fighting fires in our community, but we need to recognize that there are risks involved in their occupation. These are the risks that we need to study. We need to have medical evidence, and we need to not only continuously upgrade our knowledge of the occupational hazard but to see how best this government can help.

I believe there are close to 3,600 professional firefighters in 50 different communities around British Columbia and the Yukon. This government has demonstrated its solid commitment to firefighters throughout the years since we have been in government.

[1525]

In 2003 the government asked the Workers Compensation Board to review a request from the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association that firefighters who develop certain cancers be presumed to have contracted them in the course of their work.

In 2005 the government amended the Workers Compensation Act to recognize firefighters' cancer risks to include brain, bladder, kidney, non-Hodgkins lymphoma, urethral, colorectal and leukemia as occupational diseases. In 2005 the government extended this to include part-time, paid on-call volunteer firefighters, which I think was an addition that this government did upon the recommendations of the professional firefighters.

In 2007 the government again ensured that the seasonal forest fire fighters working in the B.C. public service were eligible to receive full medical and extended health benefits. This was another extension which I think was really laudable on the part of this government. In 2007 the government granted \$2 million towards accommodations in the Burn Fund building.

In 2008 the government granted \$2 million to the Burn Fund building to support education and research. The reason that I am chronologically putting these things forward is the efforts of this government on a continuous basis to work with the professional firefighters....

In the year 2008 government added testicular cancer to the list of occupational diseases for firefighters, bringing the number up to eight. In 2008 the government also announced planned changes to the legislation in 2008-09 to add lung cancer to the list. In March of 2009 the government follows through this plan to amend the Workers Compensation Act to include lung cancer on the list of occupational diseases for firefighters, bringing the number of the occupational diseases to nine.

In this bill, as we debate this bill and offer our comments, I think that the government has worked really well with the professional firefighters to accommodate

their request, and after having seen the medical evidence and the proof that these are occupational hazards, we have continued to expand the list.

I also would like to recognize the work of Miles Ritchie and Mike Hurley, both from Burnaby, who have continuously worked with us to make us understand, first of all, what their occupational hazards involve and then to ask us for our support in recommending to the minister of the time to make sure that these presumptions were included in the bill. I am very proud of this government's record in working with the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters.

I would like to mention that I will be supporting this bill, which I think is a result of tremendous work that has been done in partnership with the Burnaby Fire Fighters and the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters as a whole.

**C. Trevena:** I, too, am rising in support of Bill 8, which brings lung cancer as one of the cancers recognized under workers compensation for firefighters.

I think that none of us can really conceive what a firefighter must go through in their daily lives. I think that it's not a place here to be scoring political points on who had said what when. I think we should all be marking the fact that we do actually have this here. It's going to be put into workers compensation so that in the future we do have firefighters who are going to be protected. I think that both sides of the House should be celebrating that.

I don't want to press the case. I say it's not winning political points, but I have to recognize that my colleague the former critic from New Westminster did raise this as a possibility in 2005. We could have had this in since 2006 if the act had passed, but we are here in 2009, and it is the case.

[1530]

I think we really do have to note the tragic situation that firefighters find themselves in and that they are contracting these diseases, these cancers, in their daily work — work that we expect them to do. That's why it's so important that we as a House jointly support this and jointly say that this is something that is important.

I would hope that the House equally speedily recognizes the other case of esophageal cancer. As my colleague from New Westminster said, a volunteer firefighter from North Island did die with that disease, and it isn't covered. It is something that should be covered in the future. We do have it on the motion paper.

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

I'm sure that we would be wholeheartedly in support if the government wanted to move this in, in the next few weeks before the House rises, before the election — to bring in esophageal cancer also. This is something that, as I say, we have been pushing for and would be very pleased to be able to support.

But we are here today talking about the fact that lung cancer for non-smokers is going to be included. I think we should be working to ensure that this goes through very swiftly so that the firefighters who have lung cancer as a result of their work.... We know that some are going to slip through the cracks, and that is exceedingly unfortunate. But for those who have it and will be able to be covered under this act, do so — and that it happens as swiftly as possible.

As I say, there is esophageal cancer that we are also hoping.... The firefighters themselves came and talked to us about that. I hope that this government moves swiftly on that and that we aren't waiting beyond the end of this session.

Again, it's quite tragic that we have the recognition by year. Every parliamentary session we seem to be recognizing one more cancer, one more cancer. I think that if we could just say: "Okay, we want to move ahead. We've got lung cancer here. Let's move ahead with esophageal cancer...." It is something that we have tabled as a motion and hope that the government does move on very quickly.

I know that a number of people want to have a few words to acknowledge this on both sides of the House. As I say, I think this is not a time to score partisan points. It's a time to really accept this, move on and hope that we swiftly embrace the other cancers.

**Hon. R. Cantelon:** I too rise in support of this bill. I'd like to speak briefly about the process that led to this support certainly in my constituency.

First, I'd like to acknowledge the firefighters who have approached me and have been talking to me over a number of years on a number of issues that concern them: president of the local Mike Rispen, Chad Porter, Brian Woods, Ron Daly, Bill Eggers and Mark Brakley.

I've gotten to know these gentlemen very, very well over the past few years. I think they've taken a very collaborative and positive approach in how they come forward and suggest changes. These are obvious ones to us and obvious to them, and I know that both sides of the House will support them. The manner in which they did it, I thought, was very instructive to me and to other people that wish to get things done.

The first characteristic I attribute to them is persistence. They come on an annual basis and meet with me — in fact, annual and even semi-annual — and I have very polite and well-informed discussions with them. I have to say that these are very large guys. At first it can be a little intimidating. You wonder just what approach they're going to use, but I want to tell you that they're as eloquent as they are effective as firefighters. Certainly, this is an approach that I think is very effective in talking to legislatures, and I want to salute them on that.

I would also like to say that we, of course, recognize the other aspect of the job that they do fearlessly:

entering fires, smoke-filled rooms where no one would dare to go, even with the protective equipment that they have. They were relating to me when I met with them the other day....

Well, the wife of one of the firefighters has now requested that he do the laundry associated with work in the fire hall, because even after they take off the protective equipment, the stuff just permeates the equipment right through to the clothing that they wear underneath. There's a toxic odour to it that they don't want to bring into the house with them.

[1535]

To me, that spoke very eloquently of just how dangerous this work is and how it must affect them physically and personally. Yet they carry on and do this work. As they learn more and more about the dangers and the risks that they do, they still bravely do these jobs.

It was even related, too, that they can feel it after they're off shift and they've been on a fire. It actually exudes out of the pores of their skin. It has been absorbed through their skin.

These are very, very dangerous risks. I highly support how they work, but mostly I'd like to salute Mike, Chad, Brian, Ron, Bill and Mark. I've come to know them very, very well. They're very effective leaders in their community and very effective spokespeople for their member firefighters.

I'm happy to stand here and support this bill.

**H. Bains:** I, too, rise to speak in favour of Bill 8, recognizing lung cancer as a compensable disease for the firefighters.

I want to thank Larry Thomas from Surrey, who was the president of the Surrey Firefighters Association and also a key member of the B.C. Fire Fighters Association executive. Their tireless work around this issue and other issues to make the lives of their members better — I want to thank them for that.

I want to thank all the firefighters for always being ready to put their lives on the line in order to protect us. They go out there, like the member said before, without even thinking about what lies ahead of them, and the only thing on their mind when they're going on a call is how they're going to protect and save lives and property.

I think the fact that both sides in the House today are tripping over each other to say who was first goes to say a lot about the firefighters and the kind of respect they have garnered across all the political lines. I think they have done a tremendous job in bringing this issue to the forefront, bringing the awareness to the public and bringing the awareness to the legislators here.

Finally, I think it's a good day. It's a good day for the firefighters that the lung cancer now will be recognized as a compensable disease without having to prove that they suffered this in the time of their duty. I think it's a good day for their families, because many of them

suffer as a result of them losing their lives. They were faced with the toxic fumes, and they ended up losing their lives.

I think we as a society should say that it's a good day for us, for recognizing the reality of the life of firefighters who are constantly put in danger, a danger which they may not see clearly at that particular time, but over time it affects their lives.

I want to say that the esophageal cancer I was hoping would be part of the list that the minister has put together of the type of cancers to be covered is not there. I am disappointed. Hopefully, the bill can be amended, or the minister actually can make some amendments to it — I don't know if there is a procedure to do that — to include esophageal cancer as one of the cancers to be recognized.

At the end, I stand here proudly to speak in favour of this bill, and I'm sure that both sides of the House will support this. I think our firefighters out there deserve our support. With that, I want to thank them for bringing the awareness. I want to thank all the members who are actually here supporting this bill.

**J. Yap:** It's my honour to rise to join this debate and speak on this bill, Bill 8, Workers Compensation Amendment Act. I will be speaking in favour of this act and supporting this act, joining all other previous speakers who have spoken in favour of this act.

[1540]

Like everyone else who has spoken before me, I am grateful for the work that firefighters do for members of the community each and every day. As has been mentioned, they go into dangerous situations without thinking, going in to put out dangerous fires to help people, to save lives. They do this as a matter of course because it's their job, and all of us are grateful for the work that they do.

This gratitude has to go beyond recognizing that they do a great and valuable job for us. We need to recognize as well, as our government has done, that they do put themselves at risk for certain diseases. With this act, we will be recognizing that lung cancer will be added to the list of cancers that for firefighters who qualify as non-smokers will be presumed to have occurred — the affliction — as a result of work as a firefighter.

This is the latest in a number of changes to the legislation, the journey beginning in 2003 when our government was approached by the Professional Fire Fighters Association to look at including diseases on a presumptive basis.

In 2005 our government acted to amend the Workers Compensation Act to recognize cancer risks such as brain cancer, bladder cancer, kidney, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, colorectal and leukemia as occupational diseases. Today with this act we will recognize the presumption of lung cancer.

This is the result of a great collaboration, a great partnership, between the members of the Professional Fire Fighters Association and our government in working together to look at the signs that support the need for us to take this action.

I am very supportive of this act, and I do want to thank the members of the firefighters association of my community of Richmond, who have worked hard on this file, specifically Tim Wilkinson, Cory Parker and Rich MacMillan, firefighters from Richmond who came to talk to us, to present the case for us to put this act in place.

Firefighters provide a great service to communities throughout British Columbia. This is an important change, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, that will allow us to once again recognize how much we value the work they do on behalf of all of us. It's my honour once again to speak in favour. I will be voting and supporting this act.

**J. Horgan:** It is also a pleasure particularly for me to rise today and speak in favour of Bill 8, which amends the Workers Compensation Act and adds lung cancer to the list of presumptive cancers for non-smokers who are in the occupation of firefighters.

I have three family members who are professional firefighters, and I want to correct the pronunciation from the Minister of Labour. My cousin Rob Suzukovich from Port Moody is one — and my nephew Andrew Nelson in the city of Vancouver and my big brother in the city of Victoria, Brian Horgan, who had his cancerous thyroid removed some years ago.

It's not on the list, and it may well not get on the list for a while. I've heard members today talk about esophageal cancer, and I know government is seized of the importance of that issue to firefighters right across the province. I am hopeful we can continue to work in a cooperative way, both sides of the House recognizing the importance of the work that firefighters do in our communities right across British Columbia. I know, certainly from my family members, that they are selfless public servants.

We met with representatives. My colleague from Alberni and I met with the Alberni firefighters and with Rob from Port Moody. I pointed out — and this will be no surprise to other members — that when we're looking at the popularity of public servants, we in this place are fairly low down the list. I don't think anyone would be alarmed by that.

[1545]

Interjection.

**J. Horgan:** My friend from Prince George quite rightly says that we're at the bottom.

So whenever we can find ourselves doing what we can for those who are absolutely at the top — firefighters, police, emergency service personnel — I think it's

our job to do that, and not just because we can bask in that reflective glory, which we like to do. We often have these moments where we all recognize the importance of the public service that's provided by firefighters. When they make a modest proposal, although it does have an impact on revenues to WCB and to government, it's important that we make the right choice, not because we want to bask in that glory but because of the important work they do.

I think this is one of those rare occasions. I believe this is the second time in this parliament that we've had the opportunity to come together, opposition and government, to support a worthy undertaking. I commend the Minister of Labour and those who have come before him — the member for Richmond Centre and previous Labour ministers — who have made this a priority for the government of B.C. I'm very happy to be in an opposition that recognizes that this is not partisanship. It's not an opportunity to score points. It's an opportunity to do the right thing.

It's not just because I have three family members who spend their lives running into burning buildings. It's all of the other people that do it with them, men and women right across the province.

This is a good bill. This is one of these days when all of us will be able to go home and say we did something good for the people of B.C.

**Hon. S. Bond:** On February 2 a gentleman by the name of Russell Wangersky won Canada's largest non-fiction award. Russell Wangersky was actually recognized for his memoir called *Burning Down the House: Fighting Fires and Losing Myself*.

The judges who selected this book said this of Wangersky's book: *Burning Down the House* is "an astonishingly insightful and harrowing depiction of modern-day firefighting...an account so relentlessly lucid and visceral that the reader emerges from the experience almost as exhausted and traumatized as the writer himself."

When Wangersky — and I happen to have had the pleasure of being there — accepted that award, he came to the podium, and he was incredibly overcome. He said this, his voice shaking: "I love to fight fires, but I won't again."

The book and Wangersky's comments depict for us what men and women every day in British Columbia do on our behalf. They overcome the fear and all that goes with walking or running into a burning building to make sure that they protect the women and the children and the families of British Columbia. I was incredibly moved by the fact that Wangersky's pain is reflected in his book.

I would really commend this work to those of us in the House today who are rising together. I would completely concur. This isn't a day for who said what when and where. It's a day for recognizing the fact that

we have a responsibility as legislators in this province to work together to ensure that the people who serve British Columbia in this way have every opportunity to be protected and cared for in an appropriate way.

Our bill, Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, will actually create a lung cancer presumption for firefighters who qualify as non-smokers. One of the things I think both sides of the House have agreed on and have made clear in their comments is that probably every one of us has created a personal relationship as a result of the incredible efforts made by firefighters in this province related to these types of issues.

I am very lucky, as are my colleagues from Prince George–Omineca and Prince George North, because we were fortunate enough to have the past president of the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters, Mr. Al Leier, live and work there in Prince George. I sat beside Al on numerous plane flights, where he took every opportunity to remind me about the importance of British Columbia being a leader in this area that we are adding this amendment for today.

[1550]

As we've developed personal relationships with the firefighters in our own communities, we've all been compelled to find ourselves in the place we're in today. I want to say an incredibly profound thank-you to John Iverson, Blake King and Fred Wilkinson in particular, who were here most recently but who have on a regular basis met with us.

In fact, they invited us to the fire hall one day, and we made sure that we arrived at the fire hall when it was breakfast time. Our firefighters created the most incredible breakfast for us, and we....

**J. Horgan:** They can cook.

**Hon. S. Bond:** They are great cooks. I would totally agree with the member for Malahat–Juan de Fuca. They are fantastic cooks. They have amazing hospitality.

Even while we were sharing that breakfast together, they still took the opportunity to remind us about the importance of the work they're doing.

What I'm so impressed by is the professionalism that these firefighters brought to the Legislative Assembly. In fact, we get lobbied by a lot of people on a lot of subjects, but from our perspective — and I'm sure this would also bring agreement from both sides of the House — very few organizations do it as well, as methodically and as scientifically based as our professional firefighters have done.

We look forward to that ongoing relationship. I know there's always more to be done, and I can assure you that all of us in this House are committed to seeing that ongoing work being done over the next number of months and years.

I also want to recognize the firefighters for something incredible that they do. In my particular role as Minister

of Education, I get to see that side of it in particular. I also had the chance to meet with Tim Baillie. I think Tim is a firefighter in Surrey. The member opposite is nodding, so I've got the right place. There is no one more passionate than Tim Baillie about making sure that people in British Columbia are educated about the kinds of challenges that are faced by families every day — things that are preventable, things that we can actually help people become more aware of.

When I think about firefighters, I often think about Burn Awareness Week. If you think about what they do — and we've just had one in February, in fact — firefighters help public and private elementary schools in British Columbia, parents, students and their families access information. They do it in innovative ways, where they actually look at products that are interactive. They talk about quizzes and colouring pages and animated videos. They do all of that in addition to the incredible work they do protecting our lives and our communities every single day.

Today not only do we want to commend our firefighters for their very professional efforts in making sure that each one of us in this House was well aware of the need to move forward on this legislation — and I am proud to stand up today as part of a Legislature that is adding another step and another piece to the work we've done with our firefighters — but we also want to thank them for the countless hours that they spend volunteering, caring for kids, creating the burn camp where children have an opportunity to be themselves and share time with others who have gone through the horrific experience of major burns.

I join with my colleagues today. I want to say how proud we should be, and I agree with the member for Malahat–Juan de Fuca that today when we leave this place... We leave this place feeling different ways on different days, but today is a day of celebration. It is a day of commitment to say that we will continue to work with our firefighters.

As I close my comments, obviously in favour of this, I certainly commend the book and the work of this incredible Canadian author, Russell Wangersky, to our members if they really want to have that personal insight in terms of how challenging this job is.

Let me just read, in closing, a sentence or two from one of his stories. Here's what he says: "I don't fight fires anymore. My heart still jutters in my chest when I hear the trucks coming. It would have been simpler if I had been permanently burned. If I had been seriously hurt, there would be a visible reason, a badge that wears like an honourable discharge. But nothing is simple."

I will certainly be supporting this. I hope that each one of us will celebrate the fact that we've done a good thing here today.

**R. Chouhan:** It's a great honour to rise today to support this bill, which deals with the lives of firefighters. When we're talking about firefighters, we are not just talking about people who are putting their life on the line jumping into burning buildings. We are also talking about very decent human beings who are so committed to support their community.

I can talk about firefighters in Burnaby. Every time there is a need for the community to help children or seniors, firefighters in Burnaby are always there. Be it community cleanup day or to raise funds to raise awareness — burn awareness and all that — firefighters are always there. I'm so proud to be associated with Burnaby Firefighters Association.

As the previous speaker has said — and many others — today we are here to celebrate that moment when we can all jointly and together support our firefighters all over British Columbia. A few days ago we met with firefighters from various communities here, and I'm proud to say that I had a visit from three extraordinary firefighters. Their names are Mike Hurley, Rob Lemieux and Miles Ritchie.

These are the three leaders. Under their leadership in Burnaby, firefighters have been doing a tremendous job to support our community, and I commend their work, the job they are doing. I also want to thank them for all the work they are doing, and I wish them all the best in their work.

You know, I wish that we continue to support firefighters regardless of which party we belong to. Today is the day to celebrate and not talk about partisan politics here.

Again, I want to say that I join all my colleagues from both sides to support this bill. Let's do it. Let's support it, and let's pass this bill.

**Hon. J. McIntyre:** It's my great delight this afternoon to rise in my place to speak obviously in favour, as we all are, of Bill 8, which is an amendment to the Workers Compensation Act to create a lung cancer presumption for firefighters who qualify as non-smokers. I think this is yet another step in the work we're doing on behalf of the firefighters, who each and every day may be in a situation where they have to risk their lives for us and for our public safety, for our families.

They do a most amazing job, and I wanted to just sort of reflect, especially at the end of my first term here. I remember very vividly the pride I felt in 2005 when this government did amend the Workers Compensation Act to recognize the firefighters' cancer risks. It included quite a broad variety — for brain; for bladder; for kidney; for non-Hodgkins lymphoma, which I lost my mother to; ureter; colorectal and leukemia — as occupational diseases.

I will never forget sitting here and seeing the gallery with all the firefighters that had come with pride to be here on the day when that legislation was introduced. They all had the red lanyards on. You look up and see the

sea of people who every day risk their own safety to be able to keep us safe and protect us.

I still can remember how thrilled I felt, and I know that much work had gone on with other members here in the House to bring that legislation to the forefront. I felt how fortunate that I could be part of a government that introduced and in a House that passed the legislation.

Then we went on in time, I think further proving our commitment to professional firefighters. Actually, we at that time added the part-time and paid-on-call and volunteer firefighters, which I thought was very important.

I remember I actually had a call to my home in Lions Bay from the Lions Bay volunteer fire department, who rescued us at a time of need with a car on fire in our garage. Those are the kinds of things you never want to happen in your life, but you always remember those people who came to your rescue.

Now, especially as the MLA, I make sure I go every September to the Lions Bay Fire Rescue fundraiser to help celebrate those people who volunteer time to be able to keep us so safe.

I think this is an amazing day actually, and I know the firefighters who are here this week were very, very grateful that we're adding yet another disease to this act. I don't want to call it a disease. I guess it really is, actually — lung cancer.

[1600]

I was very pleased to see how important.... Actually, when you talk to them, you know and understand how important it is to their families. The way it's expressed is that it's not even so much about them but about the concern they have for their families and for their children that if they were, unfortunately, to get a disease or get a cancer that obviously would end their life prematurely, they really, really need to make sure that their families are protected. It's very emotional, and I think this is one of the finest things — actually, one the finest pieces of legislation — we've done, when you know the thousands of people it affects all around the province in a positive way.

I want to extend my personal thanks to the West Van firefighters that came here and who over the last few years have come. That would be Gord Howard and Tony D'Angelo, from the West Van fire department, who are just great. I think, having had several visits with them now, that we've really developed a great rapport. I also want to extend a very special thank-you to Jay Brownlee, who is a vice-president now of the Fire Fighters Association for the Lower Mainland. Jay also is in West Vancouver.

They have been just amazing. They have done all sorts of this.... Others have spoken, I know, about the volunteer events. They do the Pipes by the Sea down at Ambleside Beach.

This summer, when I really wanted to give them back a show of support, I was invited to attend the launch of

the kids burn camp that is up in Squamish, which is in my constituency. They had firefighters from all around the Lower Mainland, certainly, if not the province — including, I think, Tim Baillie, who someone mentioned before, who worked so hard on the Burn Fund.

When I saw all these kids frolicking around on a beautiful summer day in July.... They were frolicking around, and they were all playing with hoses and fire-hoses. In fact, I got drenched myself, which I'm sure was good sport for others. It was just a wonderful event to know and see that the firefighters, on their own time and through their own efforts, are so engaged in doing something that will help children and help families through their generosity and through their time.

I just want to add my voice to the support in the House today for this legislation and to thank all the firefighters who do what they do each and every day.

**N. Simons:** I'd like to take this time to offer my congratulations, as well, to the professional firefighters for making sure that the message they've been carrying for some time has resonated with the legislators of the parliament of British Columbia. I'm proud to say that both sides are very supportive of this initiative.

I think it's essential that we explain to folks, who might not understand, that now certain cancers are associated as linked to the occupation of firefighting, and we've simply today added to that list lung cancer for non-smokers.

The Professional Fire Fighters of Powell River. I had an opportunity to meet with a couple of them when they came down this time. It's just yet another opportunity to meet with the fine folks who work up there. I have to say, in particular for Powell River, that they've been very helpful to me. In fact, they were the ones that suggested a constituency assistant for me. Maggie Hathaway was a former dispatcher for the Powell River firefighters. She knows where every street address and every home is, so it's been very helpful. I know that they have great respect for her as well.

The firefighters know the kind of work that they're getting into. They do it proudly. They do it without hesitation, and I think the onus is on us to ensure that they are protected from some of the negative impacts that their job might entail.

With that, I simply offer my congratulations, my full support to this. I think there's more work to be done in other areas to ensure that firefighters are able to do their jobs effectively, including issues around seismic upgrading to ensure that our fire departments are safe and our fire departments are in a position to be able to respond in times when there might be a natural disaster or what have you. They're prepared. They're excellent, well-trained individuals, and we have to do what we can to ensure that they can do their job as well as they want to do their job.

Congratulations. The support of the House is with you, and thank you for what you do.

With that, Madam Speaker, I cede the floor to the next speaker.

[1605]

**D. MacKay:** I'm pleased to stand today to speak in support of Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

Going through the bill itself, I notice that section 1 describes what's happening in the bill, where we amend the definition of an occupational disease to include primary site lung cancer for firefighters. Basically, section 2 of the act states simply that it provides that "primary site lung cancer contracted by a non-smoking firefighter is an occupational disease and repeals a spent provision."

I have to ask. What has taken us so long to get to the stage that we're finally at today to protect firefighters and people that put themselves at risk every time they go to a fire? I can't help but talk about this, except I've got to go back a little bit from a personal side of this and talk about that dreaded word, cancer.

Cancer is not a pretty word. I can think back to my own mother, who started off with breast cancer. She had her breast cancer removed, and I went back to visit her in Royal Alex Hospital. I'll never forget walking into the hospital room, and there's my mother sitting on the edge of the bed, smoking a cigarette. She was still smoking.

Later on she got lung cancer. She finally quit smoking after she got lung cancer because they removed a portion of her lung. Unfortunately, my mom passed away from brain cancer several years later.

Lung cancer is a terrible disease. When I go back to a previous career... Having attended several postmortem examinations — lots of postmortem examinations — and having seen people who were smokers, I can't believe people continue to smoke today in spite of some of the things that we educate our young people on and having seen some of the things that I saw during those postmortem examinations on people who smoke cigarettes.

As soon as the chest cavity was opened up... This sounds a little bit gross. This is the reality of lung cancer and people who continue to smoke. Invariably, most people, from my understanding, that smoke wind up with lung cancer. The lungs of people who smoke are black. Lungs are supposed to be pink, but invariably, in lung cancer or in smokers' cases, the lungs are black. They look like lumps of coal.

Some of those postmortem examinations also looked at bodies of people who had lung cancer, usually from smoking, and the sight is not very pretty. I apologize for getting off track slightly, but it brought back so many memories to me when we started talking about lung cancer.

Lying in bed in a small community at two o'clock in the morning, when it's 25 or 30 below, the fire sirens go, and you think: "Oh God, whose place is on fire now?"

Because it's usually a fire call that gets these people out of bed. These volunteer firemen get out of their bed, they get dressed, and they rush down to the fire hall and respond on behalf of the people who live in that community to protect them from fire.

They don't know what they're getting into when they get out of bed in the morning. They leave their families. They get on the fire truck and respond to a fire call.

I suspect that I'm no different than anybody else living in a small community. When you hear that fire siren go in the middle of the night, these people get out of bed and they respond. I just pull the covers over my head and go back to sleep and pray that it's not somebody that I know personally that is going to suffer a terrible disaster by having their home or apartment or whatever it is catch on fire.

But I also think about those people who are responding, because these young people that respond to these fires in small communities are made up of people who live in the community, and most of us know who they are.

To those young people who put themselves at risk every time they go to a fire call... I think we as a society owe these people exactly what we are doing here today, and that is including lung cancer amongst several other cancers as occupational hazards for those people that look after us in the middle of the night, when it's 30 below and they get out of bed to respond to a call.

I am pleased and happy that we are acknowledging lung cancer as an occupational hazard and a disease that a lot, if not some, of our firefighters are subject to as they attend these fires on our behalf. We have breathing apparatus for them, but that doesn't protect them entirely.

I certainly stand here in support of this bill, and I'm pleased to do so.

[1610]

**S. Herbert:** I rise today to support Bill 8. I'm very glad that it has finally come to this floor, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward today. I think it's a bill whose time has definitely come, if not some time ago, but it's here today, and we should be glad that it's here today.

I spoke with Gord Wilson and a number of Vancouver firefighters — Local 18 — and they expressed how very clearly they needed this bill. They expressed how much they also were looking forward to adding esophageal cancer as something to be considered, because, as all members here I'm sure know, they are putting their lives on the line for us. They're putting their lives on the line for families, large, small, individuals, businesses — really anybody. They don't know what they're going to face when they go out on a call quite often, and quite often it's a situation which is very dangerous.

Just yesterday, Monday, in my community there was a hazmat call-out just across from my office. To see how

quickly and how respectfully the firefighters responded to local residents' concerns, to businesses' concerns, to make sure that they could continue to function.... Meanwhile, the firefighters are facing a very difficult, and could be challenging situation.

They again and again show how much they give to the public and how much they do for all of us. I had the opportunity to work with some firefighters who every year come and put on the big Christmas light display in Stanley Park to raise money for the Burn Fund. Their commitment to children, to people living with horrific burns and what that can do and how they hope to rebuild those people's lives with their assistance is something to be lauded by all of us.

When Gord Wilson came to visit, he raised with me concerns around their signals being able to reach into buildings more than six storeys tall. Certainly in my community of Vancouver-Burrard we have many, many towers — 20 storeys and up. So they raised those concerns as part of their ongoing lobbying efforts with government to make sure that we are listening to them and that we are making their jobs as safe as they can be and making their jobs so that they can perform their jobs in such a way to put out fires as soon as they start.

The other weekend I was doing street corner discussions in my community and ended up speaking with a woman who had her home just below her, the apartment below her, burnt out, and she didn't know where to go. But the one thing she did know was that the firefighters were there for her and that they listened to her and that they helped her and her family get through that tough time. We were able to assist her in getting into emergency housing, and she has now been there and has got back on her feet.

It's that kind of commitment they bring which inspires me and I'm sure inspires the other members of this House to do our jobs as public servants to support them in their needs. I thank the minister for bringing this forward. Certainly on behalf of the firefighters in halls 6, 7 and 8 in Vancouver-Burrard, we thank the members here for making this possible. I hope we will continue to do much for firefighters in this province and take action on the other concerns that they have raised with us in their visit here.

**Hon. M. Polak:** I rise today, as well, to add my voice in support of Bill 8. I wanted to talk a little bit about the personal kind of involvement our firefighters have in our communities. When I think about the firefighters in Langley, I can't help but think about a very well-known former firefighter in Langley, and that's our former city of Langley fire chief, Jim McGregor.

The reason I want to talk about Jim is because he represents all that is good that goes beyond what we typically think of firefighters. We think of all the wonderful, valiant efforts they undergo to try and protect us, to keep us safe,

to rescue us, to provide all those services that very many of us would never have the courage to undertake.

[1615]

Jim is an example of the very elaborate kind of community involvement that also is part and parcel of the lives of most firefighters in our communities. I'm fortunate because in Langley we're still a small enough community that you get to know people like your fire chief. You see them at events.

One of the things that Jim is well known for is his support for local charities. If there's a volunteer effort like the Christmas bureau or the food bank or a foundation that's raising money for the hospital, you name it, and Jim will be the guy that's at the event. He'll be emceeding the event. He'll give of his time. He'll help the Christmas bureau organize their deliveries. Jim is one example of what our firefighters do each and every day beyond the life-saving efforts that they undertake in order to keep us safe and secure in our communities.

When we think about the idea that you would be standing outside a burning building and instead of running away, you would be running in, our first thought, I'm sure, is: "Who on earth would do that?" Well, the answer is our firefighters, and the reality is they do so much more than that. That desire they have to be thinking every day about our safety and the safety of their communities stretches out into much more than just safety. It stretches into concern for our community security, for those who are vulnerable, for seniors, for any number of charities.

Jim McGregor is a prime example of that. Jim now has the wonderful opportunity to write a column in our local newspaper in Langley. I know that he's one of the favourites because over the years, as I'm sure many firefighters do, he has collected the wisdom that comes with really caring for a community and caring about its residents. He always seems to capture the pulse of what's going on in the community, and there's such a loving and caring attitude about it that you can't help but be drawn in by his attitude about his fellow man and woman.

Jim is an example of the fine people and the character that they have that are represented in our firefighters around the province, and I'm so pleased that we could have the opportunity to be able to assist them in such an important way. This job that we do here affords us an awful lot of opportunities to not only learn wonderful things and work with incredible people, but once in a while you also get to do something very, very special and very, very close to home.

So not only do I thank the firefighters for their persistence over the years in bringing these issues forward on behalf of their members, but I also want to thank them for giving us the opportunity to thank them in such a very real and profound way.

**G. Coons:** I rise to stand tall with both sides of the House to support Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment

Act, which goes to recognize primary site lung cancer in non-smokers as a disease linked to firefighting.

We realize, as people have put forward, the hard work, the dedication, the professionalism of our firefighters, not only in our communities but throughout the province. We all realize — and as we've heard, lobbied continuously by firefighters throughout the province — that certain cancers are recognized and linked to firefighting.

We currently recognize eight cancers as occupational diseases, and it's great that we can add lung cancer to that. I contacted our local fire president in Prince Rupert and talked about the legislation. He said: "This is wonderful. This is what we've been waiting for, for years." But he did say that we still need to work with both sides of the House and to work with firefighters to recognize that there are other improvements we can do and recognize esophageal cancer as it's linked to the occupation of firefighters.

In my community the IAFF, the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 559, was established over 70 years ago, and it has about 18 members and represents and covers the community of Prince Rupert. They've contributed to a rich, rich local history, a rich labour history, and they've been pretty colourful in our community also — strong community advocates and community supporters. At any event, they'll be there.

[1620]

A couple of weeks ago we had the second annual Guns and Hoses Charity Hockey Game, the RCMP against the firefighters. Last year when they had it, it was a fundraiser for the transition house, and the RCMP gunned down the firefighters. I guess it was 14 to 7. But this year the firefighters came back and hosed down the RCMP 7 to 3, with a bit of help from Terrace and Kitimat firefighters.

That was a fundraiser for the senior centre, and it was well attended and everybody had a good time. That's what happens in our communities. The dedication, the professionalism, the volunteerism that they do is unheralded.

When I look at our local Prince Rupert executive.... My good friend Calvin Thompson is the president. The vice-president is Remo Pomponio; secretary, Jeff Beckwith; treasurer, Real Jones; Sergeant-at-Arms and shop steward, Rick Roemer. They recently, in the last two weeks, have fought two huge fires in Prince Rupert. The Inlander Hotel, which is a real eyesore, caught fire about three weeks ago and then caught fire again about a week ago. They put in a lot of service and dedication to their community and put their lives at risk.

I look back to what I found on their website. It was back in 2003: "Firefighters Want Cancer Protection." This is a clip from their press release:

"There's a long tragic history of firefighters dying of cancer, and last night the local firefighters union asked Prince Rupert council to lobby the province to recognize it. 'Everyone knows firefighting is dangerous, but most people think of the fire,' said Calvin

Thompson, president of the IAFF Local 559. 'However, it's the toxic combustibles that cause multiple types of cancers. That is one of the leading causes of death among firefighters.'

Today we stand tall to honour and acknowledge and recognize Bill 8 and support that full-heartedly. I also met with some firefighters from Powell River with the member for the Powell River–Sunshine Coast.

The local firefighters from Prince Rupert. It's a long haul to get down here, so I had lunch with Terry Peters and Bill Grantham of the Powell River firefighters, and again, they pushed forward their concerns. We're alleviating some of those today, and I'm pleased that we're doing that.

My brother-in-law Jim Elliott from Oyama, B.C., which is between Vernon and Kelowna, is a volunteer for the Oyama fire department. I'm going to give him a call and let him know the progress we've made and how we've worked together to get this bill in front of us.

On that, I strongly support this, as every member in the House does, and look forward to moving forward on all the issues that the firefighters have.

**D. Hayer:** I also want to support this Bill 8, Workers Compensation Amendment Act to create lung cancer presumption for firefighters who qualify as non-smokers. I also want to say thank you very much to the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association as well as Surrey Fire Fighters Association.

Many of the members from the Surrey Fire Fighters Association were here today, and they met with all the Surrey MLAs. I met with Dave Burns, Cam Dougan, Larry Thomas, Brent Eddy, Mike McNamara, Chris Keon and Tim Baillie. I want to say, just like other colleagues of mine have said before, that the firefighters are very hard-working, that they have a lot of respect for the community work, and they are always volunteering. Wherever you need any help, they are always there to help.

One of the things I have noticed in my life is that when I go to any event in Surrey, any charities, there are always people from the Surrey Fire Fighters who are there to help us. I also know that Madam Speaker is also at events in Surrey when the firefighters are there. We have to always make sure our firefighters are respected, that when they need any help, we're there to help them.

I also know they have some other issues, some other cancers they want us to look at, and we're going to be looking at them. I also know that right from 2003 they came over and talked to the government, saying that they had some issues and some of the cancers they wanted included. Government worked with them in 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008.

[1625]

Many of the members have said many other great words about the firefighters, and I want to show my respect for them, so in conclusion, I want to say I fully support this bill just like my other colleagues. This is

the first time I've seen all the MLAs coming together supporting a bill. Many times we hear different types of issues. I'm so happy to see that at least on this bill, we've got support on both sides of the House.

**C. Wyse:** I would acknowledge my colleague for allowing me the opportunity to precede him in making my comments.

Indeed, once more, it is my pleasure to stand up in this House and recognize the service that is provided to all our communities across the province by our firefighters. Whether they be paid firefighters, whether they be paid volunteer call-out firefighters or whether they be pure volunteers, the fact is that these individuals are exposed to occupational hazards as they provide this valuable service to us. This bill, indeed, is worthy of our support.

It provides the additional further recognition of another occupational hazard that these men and women across British Columbia are exposed to as they provide protection to our loved ones, to our communities and to the protection of properties across the province. At the time of recognizing the cancer has developed, it is important that security, economically and otherwise, is provided to those families and the individual so that they can concentrate upon the thing that is immediately in front of them, which is retaining their health.

Indeed, my colleague speaking immediately before me pointed out the unanimity that has come in this House on a bill of this nature. I'd like to go a little bit further in recognizing that it was also at the recognition and prompting from this side that this protection had been extended from simply the paid firefighters to volunteers in general, and with that was the recognition that it's the exposure to the occupational hazard, not whether the individual has been subject to the disease.

At this moment I would also like to take the opportunity to recognize the work that is done in my area by the firefighters. They are almost all, each and every one of them, a volunteer. With that, I would like to take a moment in the House to recognize a chief of the Williams Lake fire department who very recently passed away. The individual had served his community well, with distinguished service over a long period of time, and after a bout with one of the cancers, had succumbed. It would be appropriate at this time for me to recognize his service to the area.

The point I would also like to make is different. From having talked with the firefighters that came down representing many parts of the province, I happen to be from a part of the province in which there are no fully paid firefighting departments anywhere in my region. They are underneath the auspices of regional districts, and as I've mentioned earlier, they are of a volunteer nature.

I wish to also recognize here in the House that this legislation covers all of these firefighters. They not only provide the service that I've mentioned, but they also are

very active within their communities in a wide variety of volunteer services that are provided in supporting the communities themselves. With that, thanks for the opportunity to recognize the firefighters and to be on record of my strong personal support for this particular bill.

[1630]

**R. Lee:** I also would like to rise to support Bill 8, Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2009. Much has been said by my colleagues from both sides of the House on the importance of this bill and also the contribution of our firefighters.

I would like to recognize the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association for their effort in bringing these ideas forward, especially from Burnaby. We have Miles Ritchie, Mike Hurley, Rob Lamoureux and also Randy Delmonico, who came here this week to witness the progress of this bill. I would like also to thank all the volunteer firefighters. They have been included three years ago as qualified for other cancer presumption.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

I would like also to say thank you to the Burnaby firefighters, especially for their contributions in the community for charity work. You can see them everywhere for charity as well as when accidents occur. They a lot of times come to the accident scene, no matter if it's a car accident or fire. So I believe those are the contributions they make.

When I was young, people asked me: "What do you want to do in the future?" Firefighters and policemen sometimes came to my mind. This is a noble occupation, and this is helping the community. It's going inside the community and actually helping the community — a protector of the community. I think they are doing a great job. That's why my colleagues also like to support the burn fund.

The firefighters are also building a facility so that you can have research, so that the families of the burn victims can have better services when their relatives and friends are in hospital.

I would like to take this opportunity to take my hat off to all the firefighters, and thank you very much for bringing up this issue and for your effort in getting this done.

**R. Fleming:** I'm very pleased to be speaking to this bill this afternoon. It sort of brings back for me, as a Victoria MLA, conversations that we had this summer. One of the BC150 projects that the city of Victoria and the Victoria fire department had undertaken was a commemoration, a monument, that was unveiled last summer to celebrate 150 years of Victoria's fire department and to honour those who had fallen in the line of duty, fighting fires, protecting citizens, for a century and a half.

It's amazing that the institution of fire protection in Victoria is actually older than the incorporation of the city itself and many years older than Confederation and our province signing onto the constitution. But I can tell you that of the conversations I had with firefighters and their families that day, the subject of today's legislation — and before it, Bill 11 — was of the utmost concern to their well-being.

Our members have eloquently repeated today their thanks for firefighters who put their lives on the line, who at any moment are required, because of the job they do, to take risks, to save lives, to protect citizens.

I think today here in this debate we are looking at a presumption, legislation that presumes that when firefighters become sick that the occupation, the risks that they take, have contributed to some of the most deadly cancers that we have.

[1635]

The simple fact and the research around the things that firefighters have to come into contact with, as a matter of their job, of their occupation, I think has obviously convinced members on both sides of this House — and legislatures and state legislatures in the U.S. that already have this legislation. The type of materials that firefighters come into contact with — the polymers, the vinyls, today's building materials and all of these carcinogenic products that are sold and used to construct buildings....

We have to have legislation that helps firefighters in their time of need. When they have to presume and prove a case for medical benefits — or, in some sad cases, their widows and their children, their survivors, have to do the same — they can get compensation. That presumption is there that the firefighter in the line of duty has an occupational right to benefits in harm that has come their way from contact with these kinds of materials.

One of the reasons B.C. has maybe been a bit slower than some jurisdictions to come to this — and I can remember it as a local councillor — is that the debate in British Columbia was very difficult. It started, actually, several years ago in local government. I was a councillor in the city of Victoria when the Union of B.C. Municipalities debated a resolution called B133 at the 2002 conference.

That was really a significant statement in this province, because what you had was mayors and councillors from every part of B.C. They are, of course, the employers of firefighters and oversee fire departments and their services. After much debate, they urged government and passed a resolution that the laws should be changed. Here we are in 2009 — actually, the first step was in 2005 — doing just that.

I think the fact that mayors and councillors of whatever political persuasion from whatever part of the province where they had professional fire departments — in some cases, volunteer fire departments — got behind that kind of change has served us well. Today

when we're talking about a bill to do with occupational health and safety, we have strong support and, I suspect, unanimous support from both sides of the Legislature for this bill.

We all have examples of bravery in our communities and maybe even have personally benefited from fire protection and sacrifice made by firefighters that we know. I think the thing to think about in passing this legislation is what it was like before, because a lot of firefighters were really, quite frankly, cheated out of benefits, and their families as well. They could not afford to appeal, and they were not treated well in terms of presenting cases before Workers Compensation for a number of cancers — the ones that are in this bill and in Bill 11 before it.

We know that it means the utmost, not just in terms of their well-being and their personal health but in terms of our respect. What a powerful statement it is for both sides of the Legislature, after what is very long overdue, to come together and to support this bill this afternoon.

I thank you for letting me take my place in this debate. I thank all the members of the IAFF Local 730 in my constituency who work for the city of Victoria's fire department and who have been tireless in pressing this issue and the B.C. Professional Fire Fighters Association as well.

**Hon. L. Reid:** I'm absolutely delighted to join the debate this afternoon, and I feel honoured to be able to speak on behalf of firefighters in British Columbia, because the reality is that we have an obligation and we have a responsibility to protect those who, frankly, care for us, who protect us and protect our families. With respect to Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, we have rare moments in this life where we have the opportunity to do a wonderful thing. This is part of that work, where we indeed get to continue to support firefighters as they go forward.

We have tremendous first responders in the city of Richmond, absolutely tremendous. I wanted to take a moment to pay a special accolade to the chamber of commerce, which hosts the 911 Awards where first responders come and are actually acknowledged for the work they do in terms of being our local heroes. Firefighters are there being honoured by the community — hugely important to me. The notion that we would ask someone to put themselves at risk without ensuring that appropriate protections are in place — wrong.

[1640]

This legislation, beginning in 2005 and carrying us forward to today, is all about how we ensure that those individuals in our communities have the safety and the security they would wish in terms of how they make their life plan, how they care for those families.

Certainly, the notion that the partnership we have with firefighters goes back a long way — absolutely. The

partnership I have with firefighters goes back a long way as well. When I was a teacher, they were the folks who would come into the parking lots of elementary schools in British Columbia and, still to this day, teach youngsters how to stop, drop and roll and how to remove themselves from burning buildings — spending time teaching youngsters, being proactive, having a prevention agenda.

All of that is important work. All of us are blessed when our children learn those very important life lessons. The notion that they have the energy and the excitement and, frankly, the dedication and the tenacity to come back year after year and continue those lessons for the young people in our lives is hugely, hugely important as we go forward. I think they're men and women of great heart. I want us to continue this very fine work. I want us to continue to add to the list as we go forward.

I also want to take a minute to thank the families of firefighters in British Columbia. They, I think, pay an enormous debt to us, if you will, for the fact that the time that their families are away fighting fires, caring for British Columbians, serving their fire services across this province is time they take away from their families. The notion that they would worry when their firefighters are away speaks to me. I want very much to say thanks to the families of the firefighters in British Columbia. I think we probably don't do that often enough.

I had the absolute privilege over the years to work with an association that provided Spinoza Bears. We provided those to firefighters, who gave them out when they came across a youngster at a site of a fire who had been traumatized. This is a talking bear. The notion that we would have firefighters who would be able to put that product in the hands of a youngster who is terrified spoke to me. We continue that work to this day as we go forward.

I can tell you that I have a four-year-old son, who most days vacillates between being a firefighter and wanting to be a farmer. He's perhaps spent too much time with the member for Delta South. But the notion that these are professions that need to be honoured, need to be carried forward, that we need to be excited about is what the debate is about. It's honouring firefighters. It's understanding that their need to protect their families as they go forward is about presumptive cancers.

We certainly are absolutely in support of the work they do on behalf of our communities, and I very much want to see that work continue.

**S. Simpson:** I am pleased to have the opportunity to stand in my place and speak to Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2009.

As you know, this act puts primary site lung cancer into the list of presumptive cancers, which is critical for firefighters. It makes it a compensable disease, which means, of course, that should firefighters in the line of

duty end up with this cancer, they will have the opportunity to know with some confidence that their families will be taken care of.

As members on both sides of the Legislature have said, we owe a debt of gratitude to firefighters across this province working in communities both big and small. I know that in my city, in Vancouver, the IAFF Local 18 is a remarkable group of individuals that I've come to know over a number of years, who do great work in our city and who put their lives on the line on a regular basis in order to protect us, protect our families, protect our communities. We truly do owe them a debt of gratitude.

More importantly than just the debt of gratitude, we need to make sure that we provide them and afford them the protections that they deserve for the job and the service that they do for us. This list of presumptive cancers is a critical piece of that.

I know that when I speak to firefighters, they often tell me that this is not so much their concern for themselves. It's about their families. It's about the assurance that should they get put in the tragic situation of getting ill, of getting a cancer like this, they will know with some confidence that their families are going to be taken care of.

[1645]

As members on both sides of the House have said previously, when we acknowledge firefighters and people who do that job, we need to acknowledge their families too. Their families make a sacrifice for allowing their family member who is a firefighter to come and do what they do for us, so we need to acknowledge the role that the families play too.

What this does, with this amendment, is provide some protection. It's a security. Should you have an unfortunate situation — we've certainly seen it in instances in Vancouver where, through a disease like this, a firefighter passes away — it's very important to know, in the middle of that tragedy, that there is some support there for the families and that it's immediate and above reproach and not a point of debate with WCB or anybody else, but that it's just there. This legislation will help to do that, and that's an important thing we all should feel good about doing.

I also think, though, as I think members on both sides have said, that this is a very good piece of news. This legislation, I'm sure, will pass, I suspect unanimously, in this House, but it's not the time to stop.

We know that the firefighters who've come, were recently here, have talked to us about esophageal cancer and other cancers that, quite rightly, need to be given consideration to be added to this list. I would hope that the Legislature, regardless of what it looks like after May 12, will continue to step up on this issue, continue to look at adding those cancers in that should be on this list and will continue to build the list to continue to provide those protections that are due our firefighters and that they and their families rightly deserve.

It is a good piece of legislation. It is good news. I'm pleased that we're going to be able to do this.

Those firefighters, who work very hard, do have a style of coming to lobby us that's quite effective. They know how to do this. They're passionate about these issues. They're knowledgeable about these issues. They make their case very well, and clearly, they've had significant success to date.

Let's give them another piece of success with the passing of this, and let's be clear that we understand that the job is not done. There is more to do, and that work will be done in due course — over, hopefully, not too long a period of time into the future — to get the other cancers in there that need to be in there, and the other protections.

With that, I'll take my place.

**Deputy Speaker:** Minister for...

**J. Horgan:** A whole bunch of stuff.

**Deputy Speaker:** A whole bunch of things is right. ...Small Business, Technology and Economic Development. There you are.

**Hon. I. Chong:** Thank you, hon. Speaker.

I'm honoured, as well, to take my place in the second reading debate of Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2009. Perhaps to echo some of the comments that I've heard from members on both side of the House, this piece of legislation will be unanimously supported, I would imagine, because we've all spoken so eloquently about how it is the right thing to do, the right piece of legislation.

I just want to go back a number of years to when I was first elected in 1996. From the first time that I met with the firefighters that are from the area that I represent — both in Oak Bay and in Saanich, because the Gordon Head part of my riding certainly includes the Saanich municipality... I can say that when I met with the firefighters, they had always come with a great effort of — I wouldn't call it lobbying — advocacy, education and raising awareness. They wanted to ensure that what they brought forward for possible changes they had done with great thought and they had done with thoroughness, to ensure that when we were able to bring forward an amendment, it would be able to be passed without controversy.

When the firefighters met with me since 1996... I think '97, actually, was the first year. I've seen a number of fire chiefs go by the wayside, but there were a couple in particular that I have been in contact with all those years, one of whom is Don Roskelley, and more recently Rob Kivell.

Both of those individuals were recently here in the precinct. They were taking part in their annual confer-

ence, and they have always said that they have felt they were able to come and see me and share with me some of these ideas, knowing that if they made their arguments, I would listen. Certainly, I did listen, as I believe a number of my colleagues did.

[1650]

I want to take this opportunity to firstly give credit to these brave men and women, these firefighters who work so diligently and do put their lives at risk, for their lobbying efforts, for working with us as legislators to ensure, as I say, that we have the right information so that when the drafting takes place, that drafting is done in a way that is succinct and is effective.

I also want to pause to acknowledge the fact that some of those who started their lobbying efforts may not be with us today. They are not forgotten. Because of these presumptive cancers and because of how quickly they can, in fact, take a life... It is truly unfortunate. We all feel that tragedy when we know those who we have grown up with in our neighbourhoods... They were not able to see the legislation come forward.

I do recall these firefighters that I had met with in my community, who did share with me some members of their colleagues that they had lost, who never saw the light of day of legislation.

We started making changes a number of years ago. People will recall that through those years of lobbying efforts and listening, we had to, certainly, look at the necessary changes. The first time those changes came into effect was in 2005, so the firefighters were very patient. They started in the '90s, and it was 2005 before the first substantive change came into effect, and then again in 2008 and, of course, now in 2009.

I also want to thank my colleagues, the ministers who brought forward this legislation. Sometimes they may appear a miscellaneous type of legislation, but to be able to bring it forward and allow members to support it in this fundamental way, I think, is truly important.

I also want to just quickly talk about what Bill 8 does imply or state, for the record, in case people aren't following every member's comments. It's really quite simple. It "amends the definition of 'occupational disease' to include primary site lung cancer for firefighters" and therefore provides that that primary site lung cancer contracted by a non-smoking firefighter is an occupational disease.

A couple of short sentences, but what does that mean? It means that that firefighter's family doesn't have to worry, that if their loved one does, in fact, contract this primary site lung cancer, they know that they will be taken care of. They know that it will be compensable through the Workers Compensation Act. It means that the family can be taken care of. That's a small cost that we can pay for those brave firefighters who put their lives on the line for us.

I just wanted to, as I say, take a moment to say thank you to those firefighters in my area — the ones in Oak

Bay and in Saanich and certainly in the greater Victoria region here; there are a number of fire departments that work together — thank them for their efforts, thank them for their courage, thank them for their patience, really, to have waited for this.

I know that as they continually come forward with ideas, they know that on this side of the House, certainly, we have listened. We will continue to listen because they do their homework. When they do their homework, we are all successful.

**M. Farnworth:** It's my pleasure to take my place in the debate, briefly, on Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act, which adds lung cancer to the list of presumptive occupational cancers that firefighters face. I think this is a piece of legislation that's been stated we all support in this House.

As has been mentioned, the firefighters come and lobby and advocate for issues that are important to them every year in this Legislature and have been doing it for a number of years. This is one of the issues that they raise. I think it's a model of how you get legislators to make changes. I think it's worth looking at because it's not done in back rooms. It's upfront, it's transparent, and it's very clear as to what they're trying to achieve.

[1655]

This year, there were a number of issues that firefighters were addressing. There are more issues around health issues — for example, esophageal cancer, which they're pushing forward on — some radio communications issues, right-to-know issues

It was good to be able to get, as opposition members and government members, a full detail of why they want the change, how the change could be implemented and the impact of that change. I think that allows each of us as legislators to do our job that much better. As I said, that's why I think this is a model of how lobbying activity, advocacy activity, can be conducted.

What this bill does is it allows and gives firefighters peace of mind in terms of if, in the conduct of their work and their job and their employment... They are exposed in many cases to very toxic fumes in fires, particularly in modern fires with the different types of building materials that are used, different types of plastics, different types of composites, different types of glues.

All those things release a myriad of chemicals, many of which we don't know a lot about. In the case of a fire, chemicals that are seen to be fine by themselves combine and can become extremely toxic. It can often take firefighters days to get those things out of their system. Even though they they've got the best equipment on, it still can get inside, and that can cause health problems.

One of those health problems is lung cancer. So this piece of legislation adds that occupational hazard so that WCB knows it's an occupational cancer, and it allows

for their not having to fight to get help to get benefits. That's very important to the firefighters of my community in Port Coquitlam, who've lobbied for this for quite some time, and for firefighters right across the province, whether paid or volunteer. I think that's important.

As I said, I rise briefly to support this piece of legislation. I look forward to its passage, and I look forward to many more years of the firefighters coming over to Victoria to talk about the issues that are important to them, to both government and to opposition.

With that, I take my place.

**J. Rustad:** I just wanted to add my voice to this debate, primarily to say thank you to the firefighters. They have done an amazing thing in how they've approached government and how they've approached us in the Legislature. They came with some ideas. They put science behind it. They built a credible case. They came and had an ask, and it was a very compelling ask.

I also want to say thanks to some of the volunteer firefighters, particularly in my riding. I had the great pleasure of joining the Christmas tree-lighting ceremony in Fort St. James just this past fall and of riding with some of the firefighters — these are the volunteer firefighters — and going back to the hall and seeing the great pride they take in the work that they do. It is such important and critical work for all of us, and certainly, from the volunteer aspect, for the communities.

The one thing I really like about this legislation is that it's not just for the regular firefighters but goes across the entire spectrum, for volunteer firefighters as well.

Lastly, I wanted to stand today and speak because I wanted to be able to say thank you to some firefighters in Prince George. This past summer my dad had a health issue. I can tell you something. When the emergency people responded and the firefighters came in, they were calm, they were professional, and they were courteous. They performed the job over and above any possible expectations.

I just wanted to say thank you so much to them for the work that they do. I know that for my family, it made a huge difference, but I also know that for so many other families, it makes a huge difference.

These people are huge. They have huge hearts, and they are great throughout our province in doing the work that they do. I'm very pleased today that we are able to do this for them. Once again, I just want to say thank you to the approach that they take and also for the work that they do on a daily basis.

**J. McGinn:** It's my great pleasure, too, to add my voice briefly to this debate and to support Bill 8, the Workers Compensation Amendment Act. This bill, of course, as others have alluded to, adds lung cancer to the list of presumptive cancers.

[1700]

I had the great pleasure to meet with three firefighters from Vancouver just yesterday. These people are just the epitome of courage and bravery in our community. I have two fire halls in Vancouver-Fairview, and I know firsthand how hard the men and women, the firefighters, work in our community. So it's my great pleasure to speak to this and to add lung cancer as a presumptive cancer.

I know that certainly the families of these firefighters.... It's really important. When their spouses go out to work every day, they do so putting themselves in great danger. To have this piece of legislation that will ensure the safety and well-being of the firefighters and their families is, I think, quite critical.

I also think that this bill offers peace of mind to the firefighters when they do go out to work each day. That's also very important — to be able to offer them that peace of mind and safety and to know that their families will be protected if, by chance, they do die in the line of duty. I'm also hopeful that in future bills esophageal cancer will be added to the list of presumptive cancers.

I want to thank the firefighters again for all the volunteer work they do in my community. I know that their volunteer work is not just with the burn victims, but that's certainly one element. I've also seen, when I used to work at a women's centre, that they would come in and raise money for the women's centre and support victims of domestic violence. They would also raise money for recovery homes in the community, as well as for various children's programs at Vancouver General Hospital and the women and children's hospital, which is in Vancouver-Fairview. I really thank them for that.

They're to be commended for their bravery and for their strength, and as I say, it's with great pride that I raise my voice on this issue.

**J. Brar:** Last but not least, I would like to add my support to Bill 8, which covers lung cancer for the brave firefighters.

I would like to say, first of all, thanks to the Surrey firefighters. I met with the president of the Surrey firefighters, Larry Thomas, and Tim Baillie and other people. Those guys have done a great job to make sure that the community in Surrey is safe.

It's very interesting that where I live, by my house, on the left side and the right side and in front of my house.... The people who live there are firefighters. So I meet them every day. They are doing a very tough job. They put themselves in a situation which is very risky all the time to make sure that our families and our kids are safe.

I'm very, very pleased to support this bill because they save our families, and we need to support saving them. Having said that, thank you once again, Madam Speaker.

**Deputy Speaker:** Seeing no more speakers, I call on the minister to conclude debate.

**Hon. I. Black:** I wanted to start by, first of all, thanking all members. This House can get agitated at times. At times very spirited exchanges take place, and I think that the exchange that has taken place through the course of this afternoon has been, almost without exception, non-partisan and extraordinarily respectful — not just of our firefighters but, frankly, of each other and some of the common values that we share as elected representatives. Our emergency first-responder community, particularly including the firefighters today, is an example of that.

I also want to thank my friend from Malahat—Juan de Fuca for giving me the opportunity to correct the pronunciation of his cousin's name. One of our good firefighters from Port Moody is Rob Suzukovich. Apparently, I did much better that time.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

I also was remiss because I went through the list of firefighters for my community so quickly that I risked great peril by not separating out the Port Moody firefighters from the Coquitlam firefighters. There's a healthy and very friendly rivalry between them, which I was enjoying the other evening. So Rob, Mike and Dave — you're from Port Moody. Jason, Spencer, Ben, Steve and Mac — we know you're with Coquitlam. God bless you all.

[1705]

This piece of legislation also covers the volunteer firefighters. We do have a fantastic volunteer firefighting contingent in our community, in the Sasamat firefighting department, and I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to reflect that as well.

Through the last hour or two, we've heard common themes. We've heard common themes of support and respect for our firefighter community. We've heard common themes of how our firefighters are more than that. They are also community-builders.

In speaking with the firefighters the other day and in celebrating the introduction of this legislation, I had a chance to speak with Mike Hurley, their president, and I congratulated him — as many members here today have congratulated him and his organization — for the leadership, the passion, the tenacity and the commitment to their organization and their profession.

I spoke that their out-of-uniform professionalism, as well, was simply extraordinary. That has been echoed by many members here this afternoon as well. I would be remiss if I didn't observe that.

He, in turn, took the microphone and said thank you. He said thank you on behalf of the 3,600 professional firefighters in British Columbia in the 50 cities and 50 communities. He said thank you for the fact that I reached out to him. It became a little bit of a joke, because he said, when I became minister last spring, he'd never had someone give him a call before to initiate the discussions.

He thanked us for being open to their ideas; for the honest, respectful and very reliable dialogue that has been established; and for identifying a schedule of the conversations, predicting when some of these conversations might come to fruition, and keeping to it. This is a very useful foundation and a very useful dialogue to have going as we work through the issue of esophageal cancer with the firefighter community and as we go and exchange the information that's currently underway.

In closing, in five short years British Columbia has gone from not having any recognition of a presumptive nature with respect to cancers for our firefighter community to being a leader in Canada. The list of occupational diseases that we identify as employment-related now is among the best in the country.

I close by echoing the resounding support that we've seen this afternoon in the House for our firefighter community. It is a testament to the value that we place on the work they do, not just as emergency services personnel and first responders, but also as the very builders of our communities.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of the Workers Compensation Amendment Act.

Motion approved.

**Hon. I. Black:** I move that the amendment of the act be referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

Bill 8, Workers Compensation Amendment Act, 2009, read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole House for consideration at the next sitting of the House after today.

**Hon. G. Abbott:** I call continuing debate on the budget.

### Budget Debate (continued)

**S. Herbert:** In leaving off yesterday when we were debating this budget, I was saying at the time that I believed that this budget and this government's priorities were out of touch with everyday British Columbians. I spoke about massive raises for MLAs and, meanwhile, keeping people at a minimum wage, which keeps them in poverty. I didn't think that was right, and I don't think it's right today as well. Big surprise.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

Anyway, I think the other thing that I talked about was how in good times we saw poverty going up. We saw the worst child poverty rate in the country, five years in a row. We saw homelessness going up 373 percent and

people really, really struggling in my communities and in communities across the province — 10,000 to 15,000 people sleeping on the streets and in the parks.

That showed me that this government doesn't get it — that when times are good and they're rewarding themselves and their friends, they are forgetting the people of British Columbia who are struggling. We've seen that in recent reports, estimates. Studies have shown that families have been falling further and further behind.

[1710]

The divide between those who have a lot and the rest of us has been increasing again and again. This study just took us up to 2006. Certainly, in the last few years we've seen even more moves to increase that inequality within our province, and that has led to real division in our neighbourhoods and real challenges, especially for those who have the least.

The middle class is getting squeezed with higher user fees again and again. The highest transit fares in Canada. ICBC — we hear about that. B.C. Hydro — we hear about that as well. It is tough, and we know that. We know that this government seems to think that that should be the way they continue — making it tougher for average folks and making it easier for the very few. I think that is not a direction that our province can continue to take.

I also spoke about.... I believe I'll say it again. This government can't be trusted. The budget numbers and the budget that you see today.... It's likely not the budget you'll get after this election should this government be re-elected. I know that, because they're still looking for \$250 million in cuts. The minister has said himself: "Oh, it will probably be a different budget in the fall."

Certainly, in the history of this government, that's what they've done — say one thing before an election and do something completely different afterwards. That's not a government that I can trust and not a budget that I think holds a lot of weight in terms of what it purports to do but what it actually does in reality.

Those are some of my principal concerns. I've laid out concerns about cuts to the arts. I've laid out concerns about the tuition fee challenges that students in my area are facing and the massive debt loads that they're graduating with. I've laid out concerns around seniors care and around how many of those who built our province are unable to get more than one bath a week in provincial facilities.

When I tell people that, they say: "Really? Oh come on. You're making this up." I say that I talk to the care providers in my constituency and others, and they tell me that in fact, in many cases, one bath a week is what they can actually afford for seniors. That's not right. That's not a way to treat our elders.

I think it goes on and on, and I know that gets the members opposite exercised sometimes. I was reading through the *Hansard*, and really near the end of my remarks yesterday, I was interrupted again and again. It

says "interjection," which really means, I think, that the government is upset when you start touching on areas that they're sensitive about, because they realize there have been failures and there have been real problems.

I would hope that they could look to be moderating that and actually putting forward an agenda which works for all British Columbians because, after all, we are here in this House to serve all British Columbians in a truthful, open manner that looks out for their best interests and puts their priorities and the priorities of everyday people first, not just the very few.

On that note, I will be wrapping up my debate. I've spoken on a range of issues, and I hope that this government will realize that this budget is not the budget for our times. It is not the budget that we need here. It does not inspire the confidence of the people of this province and does not rise to the occasion of what is expected in these challenging times for all of us — to be creating a creative economy, a new economy where we're really investing in the best ideas and in the best people who, of course, are our fellow British Columbians.

Thank you, hon. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill, and I will pass on to the next speaker.

**An Hon. Member:** Tell it like it is.

**H. Bloy:** I will.

First I want to thank the residents of my constituency, the riding of Burquitlam, for the support that they've given me and the honour that they've given me over the last eight years to be able to come to this House to work for all British Columbians.

I'm supported in that not only by my family, which is very important to me, but I have a constituency assistant, Mike Lee. He's a recent graduate — a year ago — of Simon Fraser University. I have a co-op student in my office from Simon Fraser University, Sahara Giannone, and I have a part-time person, from Simon Fraser University again, Chanelle Jen, who works in my office.

[1715]

I also have Katy Fairley here in Victoria, who tries to keep me organized and on schedule here in this office. It's the people that truly support me that I'm very appreciative of.

I get people in my office, and I can say that not all of them agree with me, but we have a good discussion. For the most part, they're very polite. The majority of them agree with me. They like the steps that we're doing, that this government is doing. I always say that Victoria is where all the politics are and that in your riding you work with everybody, and I do that. It's something that I enjoy doing.

Something that I enjoy doing is all the benefits that have come not only to the riding of Burquitlam but to the whole province of British Columbia that I've had the honour and privilege to be involved with. It brings

me pleasure to deliver money to day cares even in small amounts that help them with their facilities.

It has been a pleasure to work with Burnaby Family Life and Jeanne Fike. One of the last programs.... When I read an article or a letter that she had sent about something they wanted to do, and she was just giving notice, I was able to come back and get them money to help them sponsor this program that was run at Lougheed Town Centre. It was mentoring women. When they started this program, they had many women from Burnaby come out to volunteer and work as mentors. It has just been an amazing project, and the number of women that they've been able to help....

I look at a single-family housing project for young mothers that is about to go into construction very soon. We've worked on it for the last three years to get it where.... We've worked in cooperation with the city. It went out to bid to see who would run it, and it's the YWCA, with the province of British Columbia supporting it.

I look at the Red Cross and the work that I've done with the Red Cross. They do all the work, but I was able to help them in the restructuring of their new building in the riding of Burquitlam, to seismic-upgrade it. I know that Telus came on in a big way, lots of dollars, and put in all the communications systems and their Internet systems. Now they have training facilities that actually drop down from the ceiling so that they can change a training room into an emergency response room with telephones. It was just a lot of work.

The lady from Red Cross, Susan Borthwick, who is the executive director, was just amazing in her direction. Peter Legge was on the foundation fundraising committee, along with Mr. Simpson, the former president of Mountain Equipment Co-Op that came with all the money, and I was able to bring money from the provincial government.

We have money that the Minister for Housing delivered just recently to Habitat for Humanity in my riding. We've been able to add another eight houses under construction that will finish this project. But if it wasn't for the minister coming forward to help them, along with many other projects around the province.... This one was in the province.

I have Simon Fraser University, which is probably the largest single force of development in all of Burnaby, with UniverCity development that's going on up there, a new school that is presently being renovated and three new buildings that are being developed at Simon Fraser University. These buildings were developed because as a government we promised 25,000 new seats around the province for advanced education. To make 25,000 new seats for students, we had to provide the space, and we're doing that at Simon Fraser University.

Also at Simon Fraser University, we have a new student residence up there. The people up at Simon Fraser University — from the president, Dr. Michael Stevenson

— have been very supportive and have worked in a real partnership with our government, and it's a pleasure to work with them to help all the citizens of Burnaby. By working with the university, it's not just the students in my riding; it's the students that come from all over the province to enjoy the great education that they can get there.

Another project that has been on the books that we've been able to deliver to the riding of Burquitlam and the balance of Port Moody and Coquitlam is the Evergreen line. It's because of the cooperation that this government has with the federal government of the day that we are able to create the funding to help complete these projects.

[1720]

The Evergreen line. They're doing the engineering work. Last weekend they opened their project management office, and they're getting ready to complete the Evergreen line. I look forward to it. It will leave my new riding of Burnaby-Lougheed from Lougheed Town Centre going into Coquitlam, through Port Moody, through Coquitlam town centre and ending at Douglas College. It is going to be a real benefit to the people.

The nice thing about the Evergreen line.... I hope I have the facts right. We're doing the Evergreen line, and it's been on the wish list for a long time for the citizens of Coquitlam. They were really upset when the last government didn't complete the Millennium line. Then again, with the Millennium line they only completed two-thirds of it at three times the budget. We'll complete ours on time and on budget, as we've proven already with the number of projects that we've done. We have the Port Mann Bridge and 37 kilometres of highway that will be expanded to move the traffic in British Columbia.

I believe it's 30 percent or 35 percent of the traffic on the Port Mann Bridge that just goes from Surrey to Coquitlam-Burnaby. By having special lanes, collector lanes, we'll be able to move this traffic faster. We'll be able to run the bus service over the bridge for the first time since 1994 or '95, and we'll be able to move commercial traffic, which this is really all about, over the bridge.

It's another great accomplishment by this government — by working in cooperation with the federal government, by having a Transportation Minister who will stand up there and work for what's best for British Columbia. We have so many projects, big and small. It's because of the management, of the process of this government, that we've been able to do it.

We have the Variety mediated learning centre, which is a school for special needs. It's a great use for a school that was closed. It's an amazing institution, and they do such great work there with the number of children. I'm always so uplifted when I go there and talk to the students. They tell me what they want to do and how they want to go to community college or on to university. They're working at it, and the students and teachers do an amazing job.

We have the World Police and Fire Games. You might have heard me speak about it a few times in the House — I've been doing it since 2003 — but it's coming this summer, July 31. We're going to have 10,000 or 12,000 participants, athletes coming to British Columbia. Along with them will come 15,000 or more family and friends. Just think of the economic impact.

These games were brought to British Columbia by two volunteers. They're firefighters in Burnaby, Miles Ritchie and Jeff Clark. I believe I've told the story of how they put \$2,500 each on their own credit card at a convention to reserve British Columbia's place in line to bid on the fire games. They did that. They came back to British Columbia. They worked with John Furlong. They put together a bid package.

They came to the government. They went. They won the bid. Our government stepped up to the plate with \$1.5 million, and the rest is history. They've been writing the plan. The registrations are coming in now, and there's lots of excitement building in Burnaby looking forward to the games.

I'd like to invite all the citizens of British Columbia to come and enjoy them. There is no charge for any of the events. I can tell you that there's quite a camaraderie that all firefighters from around the world have, but when they hit the soccer pitch, it's winner take all. There's nothing but winning. They're great games, and after that they get back to being great friends.

We talk about education in lots of areas and the amount of money that we've been able to put into education. We've done that by rebuilding new schools. When you talk about education, there's something that I'm really proud of. There are two schools, Mountain View Elementary School and Banting Middle School, that I've been able to help with funding and assistance in getting other funding dollars to help run an after-school program.

[1725]

The one at Banting is called Catslin after-school program, run by Karen Bill. She does an amazing job. She started a soccer league, and actually, her dad is coaching them. I see some of the kids in the neighbourhood, and they're just so excited about their next soccer game. "Won't you come and see us?" It's really good. It's a special area, and she has a special touch in teaching them.

I can go on about the East Burnaby child care centre that ran a program for young mothers, helping them learn nutrition and cooking for themselves and their families. It's people like this that make our community.

Listening to the other side, I wish everything was perfect. I wish we could do everything for every person. I ran because I wanted to help those most in need. I was disappointed with the last government and the directions that they were taking. We do so much that I think we have to be fair on what we say and how we present the stories.

I don't think that the other side only presenting a quarter of the story is truthful. I think you have to come out and say the whole story about what goes on and not just be selective — you know, just the last comments from the last speaker when he talked about seniors and the care they're receiving.

I can tell you that when we took over, there were buildings in British Columbia that you would never have wanted your own parents to go into. They weren't accessible by wheelchair. There were three and four to a room. They couldn't move people. We've worked at it, and I'm waiting for everything to become perfect. I think we can only do it with a strong economy and the right direction, and I believe it comes from this side of the House.

I support this budget, and I'm looking for it to go through. But this budget and the things that our government does are only supported by the great people in the community. We have Burnaby Hospital, and they have a foundation for raising money. A gentleman that I've met there quite often now is chair of the foundation, Rahim Rajan.

I'm getting invited to many events because they're so proud of their new MRI. When it arrived, we were there, and when it starts to operate in the next couple of weeks, I look forward to being there at the next meeting. I believe it's at seven o'clock in the morning that it's going to go into use.

Also something that we've done — and these are things we've done that could have been done before by other governments but weren't done — is the traffic fine revenue funding, where we give 100 percent of it back to the communities. We don't tell them how to spend it dollar for dollar, but the direction is that they use it for safety, because crime is a concern for many people in British Columbia with the recent wave of gang violence. It's repeated at different times throughout generations. They have more money with which to help with this.

I know that our government, through our Attorney General and Solicitor General, is providing funds and working with coordinated police forces. It's only because of the strong economy that we've been able to provide these resources.

One of the other speakers that I heard talked about: "You've got to put the minimum wage up. Look at these people. They can't live." Let me tell you about the \$8 minimum wage in British Columbia. About 51,000 of them are mainly part-time jobs.

There are over two million people working in British Columbia at way above minimum wage. The average is about \$20 an hour, minimum wage in British Columbia. To go from \$8 to \$10 would lose 50,000 employees, workers. I don't want to lose 50,000 employees. That's where I stand up for the people who are working, not the opposition, who want to lose 50,000 jobs.

Do you know that 250,000 people in the province of British Columbia pay no provincial income tax? They would have, before we came to government. The NDP charged them provincial income tax on \$6 an hour, and \$6 an hour was their minimum wage.

[1730]

We went to \$8, and none of them would pay provincial income tax. None of them would pay MSP premiums today. Today they are better off, plus they have the option of SAFER grants. They are way better off today under our government than under the opposition government of the '90s. It's only the fearmongering of the other side and the petty comments from them, as they sit there, as they know how government should be run. They could only be so thankful to have a government like ours.

The NDP was elected in 1991 promising balanced budgets. They proceeded to produce eight consecutive deficit budgets, more than doubled the taxpayer-supported debt and left a \$3.8 billion structural deficit by 2001. That's not what I call government. What I call good government is the government of the day, the government that's here.

Budget 2009 supports infrastructure projects to create thousands of jobs and build opportunities in every region of the province, while providing stability and confidence for British Columbians by investing in health, education and social services.

Budget 2009 builds on B.C.'s economic plan to help families, communities and businesses alleviate the effects of the economic slowdown. Despite unprecedented global economic turmoil, we are improving public services and making critical investments to create tens of thousands of jobs and positions. British Columbia is a leader in the coming economic recovery.

Budget 2009 invests almost \$14 billion in infrastructure projects in every region of British Columbia. The province will move forward on its capital plan and partner with the federal government and municipalities to build and upgrade housing, hospitals, schools and roads. These new and accelerated investments will generate as many as 88,000 new jobs across all of British Columbia. Our immediate investment in the infrastructure will help stimulate the economy, maintain stability and keep British Columbia working during the downturn. Every job counts.

With our federal and municipal partners, we will build the assets we need to support future growth and development in our province. Every job counts, and that's why it's the leadership of our government that will create these jobs, not lose them by the proposed announcements of what the opposition would do. We would actually create jobs.

Budget 2009 enhances the fundamental public services on which British Columbians depend. As a result of a comprehensive review of government spending that began last fall, \$1.9 billion will be re-allocated to

strengthen health, education and the social services. Over the next three years, health care funding will increase by \$4.8 billion. By 2011-12 total provincial health spending will be \$17.5 billion, an increase of 65 percent since 2001.

The budget maintains funding for kindergarten-to-grade-12 education, resulting in per-student funding of \$8,200, the highest level in B.C. history. The budget invests \$228 million over three years in post-secondary education to enhance access to institutions, expand health education programs and fulfil the commitment to increase the number of trained physicians in British Columbia.

For British Columbians in need, Budget 2009 invests \$351 million to support income assistance programs for adults with developmental disabilities and funding for healthy child and family development. It's allowed by the recently amended Balanced Budget and Ministerial Accountability Act.

Budget 2009 includes a temporary deficit for two fiscal years due to the impact of global economic crisis on the provincial revenues. The deficits are forecast to be \$495 million and \$245 million, and we'll return to a balanced budget. These are reasonable numbers. We looked at it. We didn't want to be like a budget of the '90s that came in, and the day after the election, "I think I need a little wriggle room," as he told the reporters. I can't remember how many billions he needed to wriggle, but we were sincere.

[1735]

We've been looking at it, and we are the true economic leaders in British Columbia to lead British Columbia in these tough economic times.

What's in it for the mainland and different areas? You know, we do the whole province, but close to where I live, \$1.3 billion will be invested to replace, renovate, and expand K-to-12 schools across the province, and \$1.7 billion will be invested across the province over three years in post-secondary facilities, including projects to increase student capacity.

Throughout British Columbia, \$2.5 billion in capital spending will be invested in the health sector over three years. These investments support new construction of hospitals and upgrades of existing health facilities.

For major transportation capital structure, \$2.3 billion, including improvements for the Pitt River and the South Fraser perimeter road and transportation spending directed towards initiatives such as the Evergreen line. Now that's finally announced. It's moving ahead.

It's \$16 million over three years to improve programs like Skills Connect to help ensure that Canadians have the skills and experience they require to enter the workforce.

Protection of public services. Funding for health care has increased every year since 2009 and continues committed to British Columbia by providing \$4.8 billion over the next three years. You know, we're investing in

our future — close to \$14 billion in infrastructure projects in every region of the province.

Overall, 2010 Olympic-related spending represents \$4 billion in economic benefits across British Columbia, and we're starting to see them. I haven't had the opportunity to go out to the oval, but I can tell you that everyone I've heard who's been there says that it's an amazing building, from the wooden beam construction. They say it's not like ice I would have played hockey on. It's the hardest ice they've ever seen, so they must have been falling quite a bit. But they say it is just an amazing building.

Also, coming from Richmond to downtown Vancouver, we have the Canada line. The Olympics spurred all of this on, away from the Olympics. When the Olympics come, this is what happens. More and more development takes place around it. I can tell you there's probably not a city in all of North America that isn't envious of us hosting the Olympics in 2010. We have a lot of construction related to the Olympics, and it keeps coming.

We want to keep B.C. strong. We have a strong fiscal foundation, a diverse economy, and we believe that that will help stabilize the province for this economic future. You know, something I've heard a lot about from the other side.... I guess they don't believe us, but we will increase the low-income climate action tax credit by 10 percent, effective July 1, 2011. This new benefit will put an additional \$15 million a year back in the pockets of families and individuals around British Columbia.

I'm noting the time. I just want to say that I'm proud of this budget. I'm proud to be part of this government for the past eight years that has been able to make some of the tough decisions in the first few years that we had to make to bring stability back to British Columbia, for the respect to come back to British Columbia, to see our credit ratings go to triple-A, the highest that they've ever gone.

This is a comparison. This is a comparison of the budget of our government that we put in the House to the make-believe one that their leader has put out in the opposition. I guess she has gone back from her promise to put numbers beside it, because there are no numbers beside it. You know, the estimate, by looking at it is.... We talk of a deficit for \$495 million and \$200-odd million for the first two years. Then they talk about \$2 billion the first year, and how can we find out what it will ever be? They won't cost it. Maybe they don't know how to cost it. So if we knew that, then....

[1740]

It's a choice that British Columbians will make. I'm proud of what I've done in the eight years that I've been here, and I do a lot of it for my family. I might have told you I have a grandchild now, James, just over ten months old. I do it for the future of British Columbia.

**C. Trevena:** It's a pleasure to rise here and speak to the budget and follow the member for Burquitlam, who had copious notes from the public affairs bureau. It seems

to be the only area of government that has actually any investment going into it under this budget.

I've got to say that I find it very amusing that the member talks about how transparent the budget is, when we look at it and see right here in the introduction that it says they've still got to find another \$250 million in cuts. I think that's a bit worrying, when we're saying that it's a transparent budget where everything is accounted for, and we still don't know where \$250 million of cuts are coming from.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

Further to that, we have also heard from the Minister of Finance and from others on the government side that this is the budget for now, and we don't know what the budget is going to be in September. I think everybody is very aware that there is an election coming up, and we will be voting in just two months' time.

People are going to be looking at this and have to realize that they're going to be looking at this and know that in another few months there will be another budget. There will be a budget again in September. We've heard that very clearly from this government.

Obviously, if this side is elected to government, we have dismissed this budget. We question its competency. We question the way that the money is being spent. We question the figures on it. So if we do form government — and we are obviously hoping we will be doing so, because there are so many problems that do need rectifying — this will definitely not be the budget that we'll be going forward with.

It does give me great pleasure to stand here and talk to the budget, because there are many, many gaps in it. The day the budget was tabled was the day that Catalyst announced it was closing its mill in Campbell River.

I've got to say that in Campbell River and the north Island we've had our blows over the last few years. We're in the forest industry, and we've seen the forest industry spiral downwards. Before that, there was the fishing industry that went. But we've seen, over the last eight years, the forest industry spiralling downwards without any intervention by the government, any ideas, any new forest policy. It is a bitter time.

With the mill, people were fearful something was going to happen. We saw that the kraft mill, the mill that made the pulp, had closed earlier this year. We knew that it was an efficient mill, but with the market... Everybody is aware that it's the market, that there's a glut of newsprint, and Catalyst has been pushing for a major reduction in its tax rate. They had been threatening to close the mill if they didn't get their way, and it's closed.

The community is still trying to understand what has happened. The workers feel somewhat like political pawns. But we're a community that looks at this budget and looks for something that offers more hope, offers more ideas.

We saw last year that the TimberWest mill, the sawmill in town, closed. The TimberWest mill closed, and the government sat back and watched it close, even though TimberWest... It was a production mill. It had orders. It could have carried on, but the real contention is that that mill was allowed to close when TimberWest still has access to a TFL, to public lands close by that could be serving that mill. Yet it was allowed to close.

We have Campbell River, as we say, the heart of the forest industry, looking at this budget without two mills — without the sawmill and without the pulp and paper mill. The week the budget was tabled, we saw more than 300 people in Campbell River lose their jobs. Over the last couple of years we've seen more than a thousand people lose their jobs in the mill industry in Campbell River. That's in Campbell River alone, and that's just in that one industry.

I think everybody knows the multiplier effects, when people lose their jobs, of how that spins down and how we've got to stop it. People stop shopping. They stop buying things. They retrench. People sometimes leave the community to find work. But as people retrench, more and more people lose their jobs.

[1745]

It is very frightening for people on the north Island of how little there is in this budget to see them through into the future. We've watched with, I think, increasing horror the forest industry that was the foundation of B.C., has been a foundation of B.C., wither under this government's watch. I use "watch" very advisedly. It is the operative word. The government has watched our forest industry disappear.

I represent North Island, and Campbell River is at the south end of North Island. I've given people a geography lesson on Vancouver Island many times in this House. Campbell River is just over halfway up the Island, represented to the north end of the Island. People there have been seeing what has been happening to the forest industry for many years too, and people are fearful.

In Port Alice the specialty cellulose mill is still going, but people are not sure how long that will keep going. That is the only heavy industry still working in what was the home to heavy industry.

Those who work in the woods — or would work, if there was any work — are increasingly desperate. They've seen shutdown after shutdown after shutdown, months on end without any work. Many, because of these shutdowns, don't even do enough work in the year to qualify for employment assistance, or EI.

I've got to say this is a government that tables a budget that's got nothing for the main industry of the province, the industry that really feeds the province still, and it didn't fight with the federal government for an extension to EI. There are thousands of people who need that extension, who have been let down by this government's inaction again. Once again, we're seeing workers left in the cold.

There is nothing available for the people who need work. There's no real retraining, and there's no assistance for families.

We're working in a compressed cycle here because of the coming election and because we came in one week to talk about the Balanced Budget Act. So we had the throne speech and the budget speech back to back. The throne speech, which was given by the Lieutenant-Governor just the day before the budget speech, talked about this culture of wood. Well, I can say: "Duh." We've always had a culture of wood. We have a forest industry — or had a forest industry. We live with a culture of wood.

We see nothing here. All we're getting to sustain this culture of wood is federal funding. We're not getting any provincial funding to help to transition. This is all federal dollars, and it's federal dollars that seem to have run out, without any action by this government to find more.

So we're seeing not a penny from this government to go and help the communities that are being crushed in this economic crisis. There is nothing for that sector. There is no money, no ideas. There is an evisceration of staffing from compliance through to resource management. Still, this government, the members across the aisle, think that the Trees for Tomorrow program, planting trees in urban settings, is the future for the forest industry of our province.

For the future of the forest industry, I would hope they would be looking a bit more widely — looking at the issues of tenure reform, looking at the issues of silviculture, looking at issues that create jobs in our communities. Unfortunately, ask the ministers about what sort of jobs there are going to be. "Well, you know, there might be one or two jobs building trails."

Well, yes, trails and trail-building are important, but that will not create vibrant economies for people who need them.

I would ask the members opposite whether they've actually gone into forest communities and areas of the coastal forest industry. They would see the reality, the desperate need for funding of resource roads — those logging roads which are used by school children in Holberg, school children in Tahsis, school children in Zeballos.

While I recognize in the supplementary estimates that there was some money that went to the Head Bay Road for Tahsis, there is nothing for those people who are using the Holberg Road regularly, going from Holberg to Port Hardy, to access the pool or access the arena in McNeill. There is nothing for that. There is nothing for the road from Zeballos, from Fair Harbour, for those people who are regularly using that road — for the school children who are using that road.

Despite calls from the Auditor General to improve safety, we see \$15 million going provincewide on these roads, and these roads are public access roads.

I've got to say, looking at the budget — and obviously, at the throne speech — in detail and wondering about all these figures and where all the cuts are going to come from, it gives people a feeling. People who have been reading and watching the news, because we've had this debate for a few weeks now, are wondering. People in the rural communities are wondering whether the theory behind it is to try and get everybody to move from rural communities to the Lower Mainland. That's clearly where the money's going.

I even had some school children in here the other day watching the question period, and they said to me: "Well, you know, we're going to watch the Olympics on TV." This was a school pupil. "We're going to watch the Olympics on TV, but what are we going to get from it?"

We're talking about a budget that's supposed to be a stimulus, a budget that has a deficit, a budget that is supposed to create a future for our economy and get us through now and lead us into a future with hope, a future where B.C. is leading the way, a future with opportunity. We see that there is money going into infrastructure, and people always say that infrastructure is a good way to be building up the economy again. It's the classic Keynesian economics. We saw it best in the Great Depression, when the dams were built and we saw lots of construction.

So we are going to be seeing roads and bridges being built in the Lower Mainland, not in the communities that have the economic engines that still should be driving this province. The billions in infrastructure spending are going to the Lower Mainland. We've got the Sea to Sky Highway, the Pitt River Bridge and the South Fraser perimeter road. This is classic blacktop politics before an election, but clearly the government has no interest in the rural communities, or else there wouldn't be blacktop politics.

There would be some money going into Highway 28 to Gold River from Campbell River and Highway 19 north of Campbell River, because both these roads are well-used roads which link communities and which need funding. Of course, when we do look at these blacktop politics and look at the investment in roads, it's a very sad irony. Last year, of course, this was the green government that wanted to bring about a revolution. Suddenly we'd discovered what climate change was, and we were all going to change the way we worked.

I notice that we're still talking about hydrogen highways, but we are also building kilometre after kilometre of road. I think if this government was serious about the green economy, if it was serious about a stimulus budget and if it was serious about doing something for the environment at the same time as stimulating our economy and putting people back to work, it would be looking at things like creating light rail links. It would be looking at public transit infrastructure. It would be looking at new ways of doing infrastructure, rather than building more of the same old ways.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the infrastructure projects — and as I say, infrastructure is a way to be creating jobs — you're looking at billions of dollars going into somewhat unnecessary expenditure. You've got to ask yourself: do we really need to be spending a lot of money, hundreds of millions of dollars, for a retractable roof for B.C. Place? Ask yourself: do we really need to seriously be spending that when we have other issues that might be pressing, in other people's lexicon?

We have the issue of child poverty. There was a report published yesterday which showed the growing, increasing gap between the rich and the poor in our province. This government is getting its priorities very skewed if it thinks that it is better to invest in a retractable roof for B.C. Place than it is to invest in something for children — in child care, in issues that are going to address child poverty.

I ask my constituents, and my constituents raise it with me. They do ask why. They see their schools crumbling, and they see their schools needing seismic upgrading. They see their hospitals needing urgent infrastructure work, and we're hoping that they're going to get replaced. But in the meantime, we need urgent infrastructure work, and they'd rather have that than a retractable roof for B.C. Place.

As I say, I'm all in favour of spending out of the hard times and of judiciously using a deficit, but this budget doesn't do that. The budget picks pet projects in areas that the government wants to win in this election, which is in two months' time, and just tosses cash at it.

When we're talking about these infrastructure projects, we're talking about building things, and we're talking about investing in the roads and the bridges and the big blacktop politics. We're investing in the buildings.

[1755]

I've got to say that every time we talk about shovel-ready, we are talking about jobs for the boys. I'm very concerned, if we're looking at a stimulus, that the stimulus actually works for everybody in this province — not just for the men, the men who deal with construction, but works also for the women — that there are jobs there, an economy that is created, because now is a fantastic opportunity.

Now is a time when we can look at the way our economy is going and when we can invest in it to bring it to the future. That means an economy that employs everybody. It employs women as well as men, and it employs women at equal pay to men and not at the 65 percent or 75 percent of what men get paid, but they are getting paid as well. That means we are investing in green projects and not just in the blacktop politics. I think that we have to really assess what shovel-ready is and what the projects are. I don't think that this budget does and this stimulus does.

We were talking about the compressed session. On the day that the throne speech was delivered, there was a meeting in Campbell River about homeless aboriginal

youth — that's first nations teenagers in the city sleeping rough — and how the community could help.

Homelessness is one of the most shameful legacies of this government. It has expanded exponentially. In every community we have seen the homeless numbers increase. The thought of teenagers, young people, sleeping rough is somehow particularly troubling, because they're particularly vulnerable — vulnerable to not just sleeping rough, but to drugs, to crime and to everything that that spins off.

I listened to the Speech from the Throne, which preceded the budget. We heard about this wonderful quality of life that we're supposed to have in B.C., and many people do. But many more people don't. I've been raising the issue of housing and homelessness among first nations for months now, and the government has turned a deaf ear. I think it turned a deaf ear again in this budget.

The budget offered money for single-room-occupancies, which is rooms in hotels, but that doesn't deal with first nations kids on our city streets. We're talking there about systemic poverty, and there certainly isn't the will in this budget to deal with that. If there was the will, the government would be acting on Jordan's principle. It wouldn't be ignoring it. It signed on to it, and it would be acting on it to deal with the atrocious state of housing on reserve. That would be investing in infrastructure.

Instead, in this budget the spending on housing is down by about 15 percent, which I think that anybody with any calculator, abacus or any way of working it out would show you is not a way for a province to launch a provincewide social housing program to ensure that people have a place to live.

We keep talking about shelter. We keep talking about temporary. We talk about single-room-occupancies. People need homes. They need houses. They need rental stock. They need somewhere affordable to live. There are some people who need supported housing, but they need homes. They don't just need shelter.

Expanding homeless shelters is like expanding the food banks. It makes it acceptable to have poverty and homelessness in our community, and I think that's shameful. But I think that very sadly, after eight years of this government, that is what people are starting to accept. I've got to say that it's almost like this government wants to see that. I find that an impossible thought there, that people want to see permanence of homeless shelters and food banks rather than creating jobs, investing in people and building homes, building housing.

The government may have tried to ignore poverty for the last eight years. Its policies have created an increasing amount of desperation for families and individuals. This is the government that said, in its first days of this session, a clear and resounding no to raising the minimum wage. Again, I ask you: how blinkered, how ideological can you be that you keep saying no to raising the minimum wage?

I talk to many people in my constituency, and I talk to business owners — business owners who pay above the minimum wage. They know that the people who are on low wages, people on minimum wage and above, don't have much to spend, and they're going to spend it locally. They spend their dollars, and they spend their earnings locally. They don't put it into an investment account somewhere. They don't spend it on foreign holidays. They spend it locally on, basically, the food, the clothing and the rent that they need. It goes back into the community.

[1800]

Restricting the minimum wage is really cutting off your nose to spite your face. You've got less money going into the economy, so you've got less money circulating, and everybody is worse off. I think that the ideological rhetoric about not increasing the minimum wage is a slap in the face and also really idiotic.

This is a government that one year had the children's budget. Since then it's seen a continued increase in the number of children and therefore in the number of families below the poverty line. This side of the House keeps repeating the refrain, like that side of the House repeats its refrains. Our side of the House repeats the refrain about having, for the fifth year, the worst record of child poverty in this country. That is truly shameful.

We live in British Columbia in the 21st century, and if we cannot make sure that every child — and children have families — and every family can live above the poverty level, we should be ashamed of ourselves. The fact that children are the most users of food banks — we should be ashamed of ourselves. The fact that children go to school hungry — we should be ashamed of ourselves. The fact that schools have become the place where children know they're going to get their hot meal for the day, where teachers become social workers, is an embarrassment.

But it's an embarrassment we can do something about. We can make a change in this. The poor are not always with us. The poor should not always be with us. We can invest in our communities and ensure that all our kids, those children, get what they need. They get the food. They get the housing. They get the clothing. They get the supports they need. It is so wrong that one in four kids live in poverty.

This is a government which has left families desperate also for child care, families who have nowhere to turn. I know that the government keeps talking about child care subsidies, but child care subsidies don't create the spaces that are needed, the spaces that are desperately wanted and that should be part of our social infrastructure.

Decent wages for early childhood educators would create those spaces. You pay enough to employ people so that people stay at work, come back to the profession, continue to work. You create the spaces because for every early childhood educator that's working, you have either four or eight children who have a place in a child care centre. It's only connect the dots.

I've got to say that if the government was serious in this budget about investing in people and using a deficit wisely, I think it would have looked at a serious child care plan. But again, there has been nothing for the thousands of parents and the thousands of businesses. This is, again, an ideological blinkering that I do not understand from this government — that thousands of businesses need child care.

This would be a stimulus. This would be a worthwhile use of a deficit — to invest in child care. Because if you start investing in child care, you're investing in business and investing in the future.

I was talking in my constituency the other day to one woman and asked what she had hoped to see in the budget. She had hoped to see child care. She's pleased that her father is unemployed, because that means he can look after her child while she's at work. What sort of madness is this — that we live in a society where a woman is pleased that her father is unemployed so he can look after her kid? I mean, this is absurd, but it is solvable.

Once again, we have a government that is ignoring this and is carrying on with its budget and its fiscal plan, which ignores the real needs of families and the real needs of employers. This is something that seems to be so ideological. It's the government's wilful ignorance of this.

Businesses want it. The B.C. Chamber of Commerce has asked for it. The B.C. board of trade has asked for it. They're all advocating child care. The only organ in this province that is saying no to child care is the B.C. Liberal government. If the government was serious about investing, using its deficit wisely, that's what some of this money would have gone to.

[1805]

It would have helped the parents. It would have helped businesses. It would have helped nurses, people in retail, ferry workers. It would have helped across the board. It's an investment in our economy today, and it's an investment in our future. Child care provides not only assistance to families today, but it is creating a nurturing environment for our citizens of tomorrow, the people who will be responsible for our province in the years to come.

Meanwhile we do have parents who are tearing their hair out because of the government's inaction on all-day kindergarten, who are now still looking for child care. Other parents who have children in the school system now are very fearful because they read between the lines of this budget.

They know that it's going to mean cuts. It's going to mean cuts in education, which is already overstretched because of the per-pupil funding formula. Even by increasing the amount per pupil, it's not going to balance the inequities in our small communities.

We've also got the issue of capital budgets. I represent Alert Bay. In Alert Bay the school is absolutely falling apart. I've raised this in the House. I've raised it in estimates. Holes in the floor. The roof was leaking.

Would this government do anything? No. Was it going to be in this budget? No. Finally, the school had to get another physical structure from another site to replace it from its own area, but nothing from this government for the physical infrastructure there.

Nor is there anything for the parents, the teachers and the principals who are looking for more certainty on funding and looking for certainty on the funding of special needs and of implementing Bill 33.

I've got to say that one teacher I was talking to described Bill 33 — which was brought in with great fanfare a few years ago and which, if there was proper funding for education and not the cuts that we're seeing in this budget, might be funded properly.... A senior woodwork teacher with eight special needs youngsters in his class, he has little assistance and really no alternatives. This is senior woodwork, so there are tools involved. He says he takes it to the principal. The response is that there is no money in the budget to ensure that legislation is enacted and that there are really just three special needs students in his class.

A grandmother that I met the other day was appalled that her grandson with dyslexia was one of four with an IEP, an individualized education plan, in his class. He's been through almost five years of school, and he still can't read. Her son — not the boy's father, the boy's uncle — had the same disability but at a luckier time in the education system. He was able to go on to post-secondary training and is now a foreman.

Then again, maybe he's lucky that he had been diagnosed as a dyslexic. Diagnosis these days doesn't happen. The other tragedy definitely not addressed in this budget is the fact that there is a wait-list for assistance for toddlers right through the school system. Whether it's for speech and language issues, hearing or any other problem, there is no diagnosis budget.

In rural areas such as school district 84 on the west coast of Vancouver Island, most of the education budget ends up going on special needs. There are desperate pressures within the system and within families and, again, a budget that does not address this.

Families with special needs children. What would the minister opposite say to the mother who came into my office with a child who has severe ADD and Down syndrome? The child was all over the place. The mother was desperate, in tears. She's trying to deal with the child on her own. Her family is being torn apart with the stress, and she's getting no support because of the wait-lists — wait-lists for her son's needs and for her family.

Another mom who came into my office is getting the first holiday she's had with her husband for 16 years because she's only just got respite. These families are the sandwich generation, where you've got the parents looking after the kids and parents looking after the parents. Parents would like to know that there were supports

there. Yet we see a squeeze on both ends, and we see no money from this budget going into either end.

[1810]

In Port Hardy we've recently heard that we are going to get 11 long-term care beds. It's welcome, but that's the whole region. Meanwhile we've got the new, privatized New Horizons in Campbell River, and it's already full. There's a wait-list there, so we have seniors living in the hospital, which isn't healthy for anyone.

We had thought that we were getting some good news when we had the announcement of two hospitals for the mid-Island communities, for Comox Valley and Campbell River. Unfortunately, we're still having a debate about that, particularly in light of the seniors who are in the Campbell River Hospital, because we are over-census in our Campbell River Hospital.

I thank you for allowing me to address the budget.

**R. Lee:** I rise today in response to the budget and to talk about what it will bring to my community and our province. But first of all, I would like to thank the residents of Burnaby North for giving me the opportunity and the honour to serve them in the past eight years. I would like to thank my constituency assistants Nancy Chan, Gary Begin and Winney Xin and also my LA, Katy Fairley, and communications staffer Jeff Melland for their assistance in my work to serve the community.

Even in times like this, when we are facing economic downturn, I am proud to be standing here representing my constituency, and I am honoured to be a part of everything British Columbia has to offer. I place great faith in this government and in our capacity to brave this economic storm and come through it stronger, even with a deficit budget.

This is a chance for us to come together as a community and as a province to embrace what we have and continue to be the best place on earth. We are still in a better place than the rest of Canada. This province still maintains a triple-A credit rating. We are committed to supporting British Columbians as they pay their bills, find jobs and plan for their future. We are dedicated to making this happen.

As the Minister of Finance said: "This is a budget about stability and confidence." This is a budget based on protecting our social programs and developing our economy. Budget 2009 is designed to build on the strong fiscal foundation we have put in place and to further diversify our economy while holding our commitment to social programs and health services.

Before I speak about what this budget will bring to Burnaby and our province, I want to highlight where we stand today. On investment, I spoke briefly the other day about alternative renewable energy and Burnaby's continued commitment to leading the way in developing sustainable technologies and creating a greener future.

Burnaby is home to seven of the largest 14 alternative energy companies in B.C. We have Ballard Power Systems, Xantrex Technology, Hydrogenics Test Systems and Azure, to name just a few. Each of these companies contributes to the diversity of our city by building new green technologies. But more than that, they bring in jobs, economic stimulus and a dedication to development. They work hard to contribute to economic stability and expansion.

These green industries in Burnaby recognize the need to work today to build a sustainable future. As I mentioned previously in this House, they are working to be the leaders in green technology, using the resources they have to contribute to a new and growing and environmentally responsible market.

In addition to technological innovation, we have investments focusing on development and construction. This means that new residential and industrial units continue to expand around the city, providing jobs and spaces for work and life.

[1815]

It is clear that Burnaby will further excel, even in these economic times. For example, in 2008 we saw the total value of building permits reach \$792.4 million, up 32 percent from 2007. This is \$646.7 million for new construction and \$242.2 million for commercial projects. Again, this means more housing, more jobs and more economic stimulus.

This year in North Burnaby we will see the completion of the 665-unit Brentwood Gate residential development, the new Montage condominium development, the Motive residential tower and continued construction of the Plato condominium. The 200-room Delta Burnaby Hotel and Conference Centre will also open next month.

This is in addition to the \$47 million in commercial buildings at Discovery Place Research Park, which is being built as the flagship design. It's the envy of developments across North America. The green designs which are being used in the 150,000-square-foot project will cut reliance on the region's water system by 95 percent, overall water consumption by 72 percent and electricity costs by 45 percent, relative to a conventional building design. You can see that this is also decreasing their environmental impacts. They are investing in green technology.

Leading the way in B.C., this development qualifies for gold status under the LEED certification system, an international benchmark for green buildings. Through projects like this around my constituency office — I live almost at the centre of this development; my office is around the centre — Burnaby continues to grow and attract attention from North America and the world.

However, the successes in Burnaby are not just about development. They include investment in protecting our community's most vulnerable. We have a lot of investment in housing. In Burnaby in July the govern-

ment announced that 162 units at Hillside Gardens would be purchased. These properties, now managed by SUCCESS, are being converted into affordable housing and will provide accessible solutions to families and individuals who need them.

These projects, in addition to facilities such as the Alpha Beta complex near Confederation Park.... This building was purchased in 2007, consisting of 38 two-bedroom townhouses. They will continue to be revitalized to provide much-needed affordable housing for low-income families.

The government has committed over the last year to increasing the amount of affordable housing for residents in Burnaby, and I'm proud to say that we are meeting this commitment.

A lot of people are concerned about health care. For many British Columbians, health care is a critical part of their lives. The government commitment is seen through initiatives like the \$2 million renovation of the Burnaby General Hospital emergency facility and also investment in a three-year nursing program at BCIT to help train and retrain new nurses in our communities.

Another project I would like to mention is the Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions. The 100-bed facility is the first in British Columbia designed to provide client care, food on site, medical, nursing and psychiatric care. The centre also provides counselling and trauma support.

These are just a few examples of the way that this province is making my community a better place. Budget 2009 builds on these investments, further working to strengthen the economy, protecting our public services and further investing in the future.

[1820]

On education. Investments don't stop with health care, housing and also infrastructure. We have also committed to expanding education in Burnaby, and one of the best investments we can make in our future is providing high-quality education to our children. The per-pupil funding in this budget is \$8,242, the highest level in the history of our province.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

We also continue our commitment to protecting our children and working to ensure that during their most impressionable years students have the care and encouragement they need. This includes the creation of additional schools, such as the new Burnaby Central Secondary School across from Burnaby city hall; a new elementary school on Burnaby Mountain, serving UniverCity; the addition of five new StrongStart school programs; and many more primary, elementary and secondary school investments. A timely replacement of the playground equipment was much appreciated by the students at the Capitol Hill Elementary School.

This government continues to expand post-secondary funding. Last year saw more programs for students at BCIT, development of the new green health building at SFU and numerous other post-secondary investments.

BCIT offers more than 400 programs, leading to numerous credentials, such as advanced certificates, diploma for technology, diploma for trades training or diploma of technical studies, bachelor of business administration, bachelor of engineering, bachelor of science, bachelor of science in nursing, bachelor of technology and applied master of technology.

This government not only provides students with the best education possible; they provide much-needed funds to go towards advanced research and development, helping B.C. lead the way in academic development.

These are just a few examples of the investment in our region over the past year. In this challenging time people are trying to look forward through a tough economic time, and they need their government now more than ever to support them and invest in them, their families and their futures. That's exactly what Budget 2009 sets out to do.

Budget 2009 is designed to stimulate growth, provide confidence and expand critical resources. We recognize that people need access to support and basic tools to continue confidently into the future. Budget 2009 provides stability for families and communities across B.C., including my home riding of Burnaby.

Noting the time, I would move adjournment of this debate and reserve my place in the debate.

R. Lee moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. C. Hansen moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 6:24 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, \$396. 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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