



Fifth Session, 38th Parliament

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

Thursday, March 26, 2009

Afternoon Sitting

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THE HONOURABLE BILL BARISOFF, SPEAKER

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

FIFTH SESSION, 38TH PARLIAMENT

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Honourable Bill Barisoff

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CONTENTS

Thursday, March 26, 2009
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Routine Proceedings

	Page
Introductions by Members.....	14695
Statements	14695
Purple Day proclamation	
Hon. G. Abbott	
Introductions by Members.....	14695
Tributes	14695
B.C. Junior All-Native Basketball Tournament champions	
G. Coons	
Introductions by Members.....	14695
Statements	14696
Message from Daniel Jarvis	
Hon. L. Reid	
Statements (Standing Order 25B).....	14696
Sustainable communities	
D. Routley	
Cassidy Megan and Purple Day	
R. Hawes	
Moratorium on private power projects	
N. Simons	
B.C. Women's Institute	
V. Roddick	
Creston Valley wildlife management area	
C. Evans	
Racism awareness	
R. Lee	
Oral Questions.....	14698
Role of Patrick Kinsella and Premier's office in B.C. Rail sale	
M. Farnworth	
Hon. M. de Jong	
J. Horgan	
R. Fleming	
L. Krog	
N. Macdonald	
B. Ralston	
Role of Patrick Kinsella in Accenture contract	
B. Ralston	
Hon. M. de Jong	
Role of Patrick Kinsella and Premier's office in B.C. Rail sale	
S. Simpson	
Hon. M. de Jong	
J. Kwan	

Petitions 14703

- D. Thorne
- B. Simpson
- R. Austin
- N. Simons
- K. Conroy
- D. Routley

Throne Speech Debate (*continued*) 14703

- M. Karagianis
- H. Bloy
- D. Routley
- Hon. G. Hogg
- D. Chudnovsky
- J. Nuraney
- Hon. G. Campbell
- C. Wyse
- Hon. B. Penner

THURSDAY, MARCH 26, 2009

Introductions by Members

The House met at 1:36 p.m.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

Introductions by Members

Hon. M. de Jong: Purple Day is a global day for promoting epilepsy awareness, and all of us are thrilled that today we are joined by a number of representatives who have a passion and belief in promoting that awareness for epilepsy. I'd like to introduce some of them to the House.

The executive director of The Center for Epilepsy and Seizure Education is Laura Yake. Mary Clare Legun is the acting executive director of the Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Centre. Dr. Alex Moll, Susan Ward, Terri Beaton, Russ Morton, Jeannie Mogg, Margaret Pfluger, Brad Arnold, Joan Lawrence, Roxeanne Humble, Isa Milman and Lise Anthony with her seizure-responsible dog India are all in the gallery, and I know everyone in the chamber will want to make all of them feel most welcome.

S. Fraser: On behalf of the member for North Island, I would like to make several introductions. Three of her constituents visiting us today in this gallery are Leanne Pohl, Jamie Pohl and Jacob Pohl. Please join me in making them feel very, very welcome today.

Statements**PURPLE DAY PROCLAMATION**

Hon. G. Abbott: As the Government House Leader mentioned earlier, we have representatives from the epilepsy association with us, and I had the pleasure of meeting with them just a little bit earlier today. One of the things that I am pleased to advise the House of is a proclamation from the province of British Columbia which reads in part:

"Whereas Purple Day is a global effort dedicated to promoting epilepsy awareness in countries around the world; and whereas Purple Day was founded in 2008 by Cassidy Megan, a nine-year-old girl from Nova Scotia who wanted people with epilepsy to know they weren't alone; and whereas epilepsy is the most common serious neurological condition; and whereas epilepsy is estimated to affect more than 50 million people worldwide and more than 300,000 people in Canada and 40,000 in British Columbia; and whereas the public is often unable to recognize common seizure types and to respond with appropriate first aid; and whereas Purple Day will be celebrated on March 26 annually during Epilepsy Awareness Month to increasing understanding, reduce its stigma and improve the quality of life for our communities in British Columbia, and now know ye that we do by presence proclaim and declare that March 26, 2009, inclusive, shall be known as Purple Day for Epilepsy Awareness."

This document is personally autographed by the Attorney General of British Columbia, so we know it's real.

C. Wyse: It is indeed my pleasure today to welcome a constituent from Cariboo South to come down here. It's not often I get the opportunity to introduce members from as far north as where I'm from. I know that Margaret Brown is very interested to look at how the House looks after the interests of people from the Interior, and I'm sure she will enjoy the business that she watches today. I would ask the House to join with me in welcoming Margaret Brown to us.

[1340]

V. Roddick: There has been serious discussion — competition, if you will — over the introduction of grandchildren in the House over the past couple of months. I had truly planned to have my grandson, Lochlan Harvey, here in person with his mother, our daughter, Kate. But unfortunately, as anyone who is a parent... It has proved to be a logistical nightmare. Consequently, I ask that the House enthusiastically recognize this marvellous, soon-to-be-four, true boy from Pemberton, B.C., who walks — no, he runs — everywhere.

Tributes**B.C. JUNIOR ALL-NATIVE BASKETBALL
TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS**

G. Coons: Last week the B.C. Junior All-Native Basketball Tournament was hosted in the Alberni Valley by the Ahousaht Wolfpack, where 48 boys and girls teams arrived to come home with the bragging rights. Fortunately, the Wolfpack were great hosts as the Prince Rupert Friendship House Tribesmen came home with first place, as they beat the Wolfpack 90-62. Adrian Robinson and Dave Stewart were the Tribesmen's top scorers. As well, Adrian was named MVP. Glen Blandov earned the best six-man player award and Daniel Haldane was named the tournament all-star.

Congratulations to all the team members and especially to the coaches, Jerrett Faithful and George Sampson and to my good friend who accompanied them, Elder Leonard Alexcee. Good wishes to those guys.

Introductions by Members

Hon. T. Christensen: I'd ask the House to please join me in welcoming two guests today, two individuals who work in the Public Affairs Bureau shop for the Ministry of Children and Family Development. I think, as many members can understand, that can be a challenging role from time to time, particularly keeping a minister on track in terms of issues of the day and potential responses. So please join me in welcoming Darren Harbord and Katie McLaughlin from the MCFD PAB shop.

J. Yap: I have two guests in the gallery that I'd like to welcome today. First of all, a good friend and constituent, Bruce Rozenhart, is here with us, and visiting the Legislature for the first time from Guelph, Ontario, John Challinor, who works with Nestlé Waters is here. I'd ask the House to please join me in giving both these gentlemen a warm welcome.

Hon. T. Christensen: I have, as well, a further introduction. I would ask the House to please join me in welcoming Eric Foster to the House. Eric is a constituent and friend of mine. He is the mayor of the Village of Lumby and does that job very capably. He is the chair of the North Okanagan regional district, but soon I am certainly hoping he will be taking on a new role. That will be as the new MLA for Vernon-Monashee. So would the House please join me in welcoming Eric.

J. Kwan: I just noticed in the gallery a good friend of mine, someone who has worked hard for the city of Vancouver for probably three terms now, I believe. He's the chair of the finance committee. Would the House please welcome Raymond Louie, councillor from Vancouver.

Statements

MESSAGE FROM DANIEL JARVIS

Hon. L. Reid: I am honoured today to enter into the record of this House the remarks of the MLA for North Vancouver–Seymour. In his words:

"I would like to thank you all for the nice get-well wishes of a few weeks ago. It cheered me up considerably. I have had the honour and the pleasure for the past 18 years to serve as the provincial representative for North Vancouver–Seymour in Victoria and would not have traded this experience for anything.

"This May 2009 I had hoped to have the opportunity to serve four more years to see the riding through the current economic uncertainty to the other side and continue to fulfil the many requests of my constituents. This is, indeed, a resilient and radiant province. As some of you may know, four weeks ago I underwent a quintuple bypass. I am extremely grateful that I live in a country where such a surgery is routine, and the success rate is so high. But the recovery now requires my full attention."

As he says:

"I must now turn the page. My spirit is willing, but my heart has other plans, and the riding deserves 100 percent attention and dedication from their MLA. I have now made a decision with my wife and family not to seek re-election in May.

"Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and your staff for all your assistance over the years. Also, I cannot say enough about the Clerks of the House — George MacMinn, Ian Izard, Robert Vaive — and their staff, who have been invaluable to me and this House as a whole. I want to thank both Craig James and Kate Ryan-Lloyd, who have gone above and beyond the call and made my life here much easier.

[1345]

"To the Sergeant-at-Arms. The dedication and patience that he and his staff exhibit on a regular basis to the visitors to this building is commendable. From the dining room staff to the maintenance crews, who all show such a positive face to those who visit

and work in the Legislative Assembly, I will miss you and wish you all the best in the future.

"Mostly, I want to thank all the voters in North Vancouver–Seymour for their dedication in always getting out to vote and the continual support for all my constituents over the past two decades.

"To my fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly, I thank you for your kindness and consideration, providing me with such an invigorating work environment over the years. My only sage advice I would like to leave with you is to be continuously mindful of the people you are responsible to serve. We can all lose perspective at times. Our work is hard, the hours long, but what we accomplish makes a difference each and every day.

"It has been my great pleasure and honour to serve this great province, and I salute you all."

[Applause.]

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Dan.

Statements (Standing Order 25b)

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

D. Routley: I rise today to give a two-minute statement, two minutes worth of words, and words, indeed, are our business. Sustainable communities are the two words that I'd like to use, and they form a phrase that begs definition.

The definition is that a sustainable community is much more than clean air and clean water, sustainable use of energy. A truly sustainable community includes excellent human rights, adequate and affordable housing, exceptional health care, exceptional education and, above all, healthy democratic rights. Nowhere on this planet are there excellent environmental standards but poor standards for human rights, for public services and of democracy.

Finally, back to definitions. What defines words are actions and results. What gives meaning to a promise is its fulfilment. Words like sustainability and reconciliation disappear as does the mist of a breath on a cold day if they are betrayed by action.

The world needs sustainability. It needs it to mean clean air. It needs it to mean clean water. It needs it to mean sustainable energy use. But it also needs it to mean real human rights, excellent public services and real democracy. Real words, to be defined, require real action.

CASSIDY MEGAN AND PURPLE DAY

R. Hawes: Cassidy Megan is ten years old, and she has epilepsy. She's one of the more than 50 million people worldwide who have this neurological disorder. Last year, wanting to raise awareness about epilepsy, Cassidy started Purple Day. She wanted to spread the word that people with epilepsy can lead normal lives and that those

witnessing seizures do not have to be afraid. She wanted kids with epilepsy to know they're not alone.

All over the world, people are now turning purple. The word is spreading with the help of epilepsy organizations around the globe. Cassidy's dream is coming true. In British Columbia in 2007 epilepsy was the second most frequently reported medical condition in children, with almost 5,900 diagnoses or 14.4 percent of children's chronic disabilities.

The sad thing is that most of us still know very little about this disorder and, worse, people with epilepsy are often stigmatized. Organizations like The Center for Epilepsy and Seizure Education in British Columbia are helping educate the public with great public service messaging.

Maybe, Mr. Speaker, you've seen the ad that starts in a crowded boardroom with the boss asking: "Can I have a final report on candidates for the new position?" An employee responds: "I think we should go with this one." "And why have you chosen this one?" "Well, the other candidate has epilepsy." "I have epilepsy," says the boss. The camera then pans to the stunned look on the employee's face. This is a very, very meaningful ad.

Because of the tremendous efforts of Abbotsford's Dr. Lionel Traverse, Laura Yake, Ted Downy and others, this and a number of other highly effective ads can be seen by googling the website for The Center for Epilepsy and Seizure Education British Columbia.

Only through education can the full extent of Cassidy Megan's dream be realized. Let's all get behind that dream and help push out the word on Purple Day.

[1350]

MORATORIUM ON PRIVATE POWER PROJECTS

N. Simons: Today is the day that thousands of British Columbians are contacting their members of this assembly, calling for a moratorium on private power projects. The 10,000 Voices campaigners want projects to be regionally planned, environmentally appropriate, acceptable to first nations and publicly owned.

The debate over private run-of-the-river projects has been characterized by claims from both sides about clean versus dirty power, about self-sufficiency, the sale of water and the damming of rivers. The debate has led to misunderstandings and entrenched positions. It's time we went back and applied one of the first lessons many of us learned when we were taught how to cross the street, and that lesson is stop, look and listen.

First, stop. Find the safest place to cross, then stop. British Columbians are saying: "Stop. We want to know what our electricity needs really are." If it's self-sufficiency we're after, explain why we're net exporters. If it's for export, shouldn't that be clear? We need answers before proceeding.

Second, look. Give yourself a lot of time to look around. British Columbians want to look at the facts.

They want to know what diverting so many rivers and streams and building so many roads and bridges and transmission lines will look like to our ecosystem. We need to look at what the cumulative impacts are on our environment, and we need to look at who's saying what. Look before you proceed.

The third lesson is to listen carefully, because sometimes you can hear traffic before you see it. Are we listening to first nations? Are we listening to the people of the regions? We need to hear from impartial scientists and fully informed public.

What will the economic impacts be on other sources of revenue to the province? Have we heard why these projects are privately owned and why Hydro is cut out of the process? Today at least 10,000 voices of British Columbians are simply asking that we be cautious.

B.C. WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

V. Roddick: The Pacific dogwood as our provincial flower, yellow lines on our highways, 911 number. The Dower Act of 1947 was rewritten to declare that a husband actually had to ask his wife's consent to sell the family home.

This group established B.C.'s Children's Hospital and Queen Alexandra hospital as well as had the foresight to get behind the fabulous proposal of agriculture in the classroom. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, we still all have to eat to live.

These are just a few of their many, many accomplishments, and I had the terrific honour, along with my colleague from Kamloops, of presenting a century farm award to the B.C. Women's Institute. Too often the very existence of the Women's Institute goes unnoticed by the public. However, over the last century a great number of men and women and children in this province have had their lives touched by the important work from this dedicated group.

It was an organization that started by doing the little things that mattered most to ordinary people and went on to do some of the big things that would define our province. I, at the time unknowingly, started my life in agriculture by addressing my future mother-in-law's women's institute in Cheshire in England when I was travelling abroad at the age of 22. So I was delighted to close my career by addressing the B.C. Women's Institute some 37 years later.

Let me say, on behalf of British Columbians, a heartfelt thank-you for all that you have done and continue to do, and here's to another hundred.

CRESTON VALLEY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

C. Evans: The Creston Valley wildlife management area, a 17,000-acre piece of land in the Creston Valley, is

not a park. It is not a wilderness. It is land managed to provide habitat for 280 species of migratory birds.

It became necessary when Canada and the United States signed the Columbia River treaty and British Columbia began to construct the Duncan and Keenleyside dams in the late 1960s. As the water behind the dams rose in 1967, citizens suddenly realized that we were flooding hundreds of thousands of hectares of natural wetland habitat critical to the Pacific Flyway.

[1355]

So hastily, here in this room in 1968, the B.C. government wrote the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Act and set aside the land required to artificially sustain this section of the flyway. It was to be a great experiment in trying to use intensive management techniques on a tiny piece of land to make up for industrial disturbance of entire river valleys.

Unfortunately, the grand experiment is showing signs of impending failure. The Ministry of Finance has done a risk assessment on the site and identifies that the physical buildings are falling down, that the dikes and the pumps have not been maintained and constitute a flood risk.

They identify mistakes inherent in the founding legislation that leads to conflict in the way the board of directors is constituted, and they identify risk to the Crown should lawsuits ensue from neighbours, visitors or workers. If the management of the wetland was to fail, they identify huge environmental risks to wildlife.

This is not a partisan statement. This is a call to action. I ask that whoever governs after May 12 takes action to save the site and to bring fairness to its workforce. I ask that whoever forms the official opposition after May 12 makes darn sure that it happens.

RACISM AWARENESS

R. Lee: I rise today to talk about an important subject to all of us in British Columbia: eliminating racism. It's a job for all British Columbians, and there's still a lot of work ahead of us. With the exception of the first nations, all British Columbians are immigrants. Every year B.C. welcomes 40,000 newcomers.

For me, this is the big reason why B.C. is "The best place on earth" — the diversity that's evident all over our province. It's only through recognizing B.C.'s history, especially in the context of immigration, that we can truly appreciate each other.

This is why education is so vital to eliminating racism. By having our young people study and learn a curriculum that acknowledges our history, both the bad and the good, are they able to further understand our differences and our many more similarities.

The Ministry of Education has developed the *Making Space* teachers guide which impacts teaching and learning of diversity and respect through the K-to-12 curriculum. Throughout the social studies curriculum the K-to-12 stu-

dents are taught anti-racism awareness, through the lens of human rights and lessons of history — for example, the internment of Japanese Canadians, the Chinese head tax, the first nations residential schools and *Komagata Maru*. By understanding our history, we will better understand each other.

Racism is a challenge to be overcome every day, in spite of the advancements we see around us. Eliminating racism is a priority for everyone in our society, yet it still affects so many.

I look forward to the day when we can fully achieve Martin Luther King's dream of a world where people are recognized not for the colour of their skin but for the content of their character.

Oral Questions

ROLE OF PATRICK KINSELLA AND PREMIER'S OFFICE IN B.C. RAIL SALE

M. Farnworth: One week ago today we learned that B.C. Rail and Mr. Kinsella released a statement saying that Mr. Kinsella had been paid \$300,000 by B.C. Rail to interpret the government's core review. It wasn't credible a week ago, and it's looking like a cover-up today.

We've learned that Mr. Kinsella was hired to smooth the way for the B.C. Rail deal. He was in on the RFP. He was working the back rooms. He was at the centre of the plot to sell B.C. Rail to CN. He was working directly with top political staff in the Premier's office.

My question is to the Deputy Premier. When will we know what Mr. Kinsella was doing, what the Premier's chief of staff was doing and what the Premier of British Columbia was doing out of their office in the sell-off of B.C. Rail?

[1400]

Hon. M. de Jong: The hon. member chooses to make allegations that derive directly from information and material that are squarely before proceedings at the Supreme Court of British Columbia. It is therefore inappropriate to answer.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

M. Farnworth: The opposition has been asking these questions of the Premier and the Attorney General for a number of weeks now, and we have failed to get any answers. It's clear today we're not going to get any answers from the Premier and the Attorney General again, and that is shameful to the people of the province of British Columbia.

We know that Mr. Kinsella was paid almost \$300,000. We know that he was working for CN Rail and for B.C. Rail. I'd like to quote from an e-mail from B.C. Rail. "Progressive Holdings is Patrick Kinsella, a McLernon-

retained lobbyist and Liberal backroom guy. He provided a great deal of backroom support."

Can we get, finally, confirmation from this government that that is the real reason Mr. Kinsella was hired by B.C. Rail — because he's an insider friend of the Premier and backroom guy, and that's how this deal was put together in the back rooms of the Premier's office?

Hon. M. de Jong: The fact that the opposition choose to ignore a principle as important as the independence of the judiciary makes the questions no less out of order and answers no less inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a further supplemental.

M. Farnworth: This is about the principle of accountability in this House — of a Premier and a government who made a commitment and then broke it; of a Premier who said this would be the most accountable and open government in the history of British Columbia. What we're seeing is a sordid chain of backroom interference and backroom deals from a backroom guy, friend of the Premier.

I'll read another e-mail just to drive home how important this issue is and why transparency and answers to these questions are so key. "Patrick Kinsella received a call from David McLean, who in essence told him the deal was at risk. Anything they could do now would be appreciated and, in CN's view, needed now. Kinsella is talking to Martyn for immediate support."

That has been the pattern of this government right from the beginning in this affair. It has been a catalogue of backroom interference by one of the Premier's closest friends, one of his closest confidants, working with his chief of staff around the sale of one of this province's Crown assets.

Yet we get no answers from this government. None. We have an Attorney General who will say one thing outside in the halls and a completely different thing inside the House. So there is a stain on this Premier's office. There is a stain on this government.

When will this government stand up and tell the truth about what happened with the back rooms of the Premier's office regarding the sale of B.C. Rail?

Hon. M. de Jong: I have a quote also. It is the oft-quoted passage from a couple of years ago from the member for Nanaimo. "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."

[1405]

The member for Nanaimo's colleagues may choose to ignore the wisdom of that advice. We will not.

J. Horgan: The issue at play today in this Legislature and right across this province is the integrity of the

Premier's office itself. We've learned that Patrick Kinsella — the campaign manager in 2001 when the Liberals promised not to sell B.C. Rail, the campaign manager in 2005 after they had sold B.C. Rail — was in direct contract with Martyn Brown in the Premier's office, trying to salvage a deal with CN.

The question is: if Patrick Kinsella is the conductor and Martyn Brown is in the caboose, where was the Premier when all of this was going on? How can it be that his chief adviser, ten feet away from his office, is working with CN to close a deal to sell a Crown asset, and the Premier won't answer to the people of British Columbia?

Simple question, government members. Where's the integrity? When will the Premier be accountable to the people of B.C. and clear the air on this cover-up?

Hon. M. de Jong: On the very day when the Supreme Court of British Columbia is in session considering matters relating to certain events, the member stands in this chamber in violation of all the tenets that are supposed to guide proceedings in this chamber and, for nothing more than political purposes, chooses to ignore those principles. I think that speaks volumes about the desperation that exists on the opposition side and how little regard they have for something as basic as an independent judiciary.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

J. Horgan: Getting sermons from the minister of defence on integrity and accountability is absolutely laughable. If it wasn't so funny.... If it wasn't so serious, we wouldn't be in here today. We'd be out doing some of the people's business. Not so. They want to sit in here. They want to shield the Premier from the corruption.

He should stand in this place and speak to British Columbians. It's hilarious. It's a joke. Integrity is a joke to every single member on that side of the House — every single member. The tracks go right through the Premier's....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Member, just take your seat for a second. Members.
Minister.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Continue, Member.

J. Horgan: The *Globe and Mail* today, end of a column by Gary Mason, a reputable columnist here in British Columbia: "British Columbians deserve answers. The integrity of the Premier's office is at stake."

The integrity of the Premier's office is at stake. It may be a joke to members on that side of the House, but the people of British Columbia deserve an answer. Why is it that friends and insiders are benefiting from government policy not just across the board but right in the middle of the Premier's office? When will the Premier stand and be accountable?

Hon. M. de Jong: One day the members opposite want to be in this chamber; the next they are complaining about being here. One day they are baying for a chance to go to the polls; the next day they're asking the government to postpone the election.

The matters to which members continue to refer are being considered by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. It is appropriate that they be considered by the Supreme Court of British Columbia. It is inappropriate for this chamber to interfere in those deliberations.

[1410]

R. Fleming: You know, it was only the other week that we learned for the first time that the Premier's friend, his campaign manager, his chief fundraiser was being paid by B.C. Rail for a number of years — the years in question. This was new information. We asked questions about it in the House. We got no answers. Then came the news releases from B.C. Rail and from Mr. Kinsella's firm itself. The news releases said Mr. Kinsella only worked on the core review.

Well, it's clear it went further than that. Now it's clear that Mr. Kinsella was the fixer on the privatization deal for B.C. Rail. He was the go-between guy for B.C. Rail, for CN Rail and for the Premier's office.

So the question today is: what instruction did the Premier, through Martyn Brown, receive to "give support to Patrick Kinsella and CN Rail"?

Hon. M. de Jong: It was actually also, as I recall, two weeks ago that defence counsel in a criminal trial in the courts of British Columbia commented specifically on the potential for prejudice to accrue as a result of comments made by politicians. The opposition may choose to play fast and loose with the fundamental principle of independence of the judiciary. We on this side of the House will not.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

R. Fleming: There is widespread public concern that the deal to sell B.C. Rail was tainted right from the start, and now the public concern is about what the involvement of the Premier's office was through his friend Mr. Kinsella. We know from several years ago that the deal had problems to begin with, because we had complaints lodged to this government from Burlington Northern, from CPR, from Omnitrac. They all pulled out of the

process because they believed the Premier's office and Mr. Kinsella were working hand in glove with CN Rail and giving them a leg up in the deal.

My question for the government is: when will they stop stonewalling and come clean on Mr. Kinsella's role in the whole B.C. Rail deal? When will the Premier finally tell British Columbians about Mr. Kinsella's work with Mr. Brown to make the deal happen and sell off B.C. Rail?

Hon. M. de Jong: If the question from the hon. member is, when will this government abandon the principle of an independent judiciary? the answer is never.

L. Krog: Well, it's just a bit rich in this House for the Government House Leader to talk about principle when it was this government that broke its major campaign promise not to sell B.C. Rail. As that member well knows, the law is both a shield and a sword, and they've stretched that shield a little too far. *Sub judice* does not apply to every tiny aspect of information available to the public about B.C. Rail.

What we know today is that the major backroom boy of the Liberal Party was working both sides of the track on this one. So my question to that member is: if he's got an answer, let him stand in this House today and explain why is it that the taxpayers of British Columbia paid \$297,000 to Mr. Kinsella and his company? Why was CN paying Mr. Kinsella, and what did they get for it, and what did the Liberal Party get out of it?

Hon. M. de Jong: On this day when this hon. member of the House stands up, a member of the bar, and poses these questions and makes these allegations, I am curious how he would reconcile his behaviour and his commentary with what he himself said just a few years ago about the impropriety, about the inappropriateness of putting judicial proceedings at risk by commenting for no other reason than political convenience. He has chosen to do it. We will not.

[1415]

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

L. Krog: I can tell this member I'm acutely aware of my responsibilities as a member of the bar. I wonder if that member is acutely aware of his responsibility to the people of British Columbia. He swore an oath, as did every member of this chamber, to uphold the law, to do the right thing by the people who elected us to this chamber.

I want to hear today from that member, from someone in this government: why was this deal tainted from the start, what was the political motivation, what did the Premier's office do in this deal, and why can't the people of British Columbia have an honest answer for once in this chamber?

Hon. M. de Jong: That oath and that commitment included and includes a commitment to ensure that the independence of the judicial process is respected. That is a commitment that those of us who sit on this side of the House believe applies 365 days of the year. That is a commitment and a principle that we do not shed merely because it might be politically convenient to do so and an opportunity to score political points.

I think the discussion that has taken place today, which has taken place in this chamber over the past number of weeks, speaks volumes for which group of political leaders will stand by the principles that are at the root of our democratic processes.

N. Macdonald: We see it again today. We have a Premier that hides from accountability when the Premier's office is stained by what is going on. There is no question that that's how people see it. The Attorney General is gagged, and instead we come here, and we hear again and again a refusal to talk about something that is of core importance.

The people of British Columbia deserve to know how Patrick Kinsella, the B.C. Liberal campaign manager in 2001 and 2005, made hundreds of thousands of dollars as a lobbyist for B.C. Rail and apparently with using his direct access to Martyn Brown. The Premier's office is under.... Its integrity is questioned. We need to know: when will the people of British Columbia get the answers they deserve on this issue?

Hon. M. de Jong: I guess, according to the member, we don't need courts.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. M. de Jong: Another, perhaps, policy pronouncement from the opposition.

Because why would we? The hon. member and his colleagues are apparently well equipped to act as judge, jury, executioner if necessary. The principle of judicial independence requires certain things. One of those things is that we respect that process. That's what we're doing, and we'll continue to do it, notwithstanding the kind of irresponsible questioning we're getting from the opposition.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

N. Macdonald: Let's just understand the history here. Patrick Kinsella, in 2001, sat down and put together the *New Era* document. All the members that were there and ran in 2001 ran on those promises.

We are well familiar with the promise not to sell B.C. Rail, and we are well familiar with the fact that as soon as that promise was made, you have Mr. Kinsella and the Premier's office intending to do the exact opposite and

sell it. The same sits with B.C. Hydro and the secret deal to Accenture. You have a promise and Mr. Kinsella there breaking that promise as a lobbyist.

[1420]

It's the same with our rivers, the same with gambling, the same with alcohol. All of those point to a culture of corruption that needs explanation from this government to the people of British Columbia — a culture of corruption. When are British Columbians going to get the answers that they deserve?

Hon. M. de Jong: Well, Mr. Speaker, clearly the member is in the wrong venue. He should ask the member for Nanaimo for his robes and get over to the courtroom. He seems so intent on interfering in that judicial process that maybe that's where he should take his arguments.

He and his colleagues seem not to understand one basic, fundamental principle — that we have courts with judges who are independent of the political process, independent of the executive branch, independent of the legislative branch. They are charged with the task of adjudicating matters that are in dispute.

The member may feel himself qualified to pass judgment and render a verdict. We aren't. We will not substitute. We will not interfere. We will respect the independence of the judiciary.

B. Ralston: We are raising a serious question that concerns the very integrity of the highest office in this province, the Office of the Premier. The question is a very simple one. What did the Premier tell his political chief of staff, Martyn Brown, to tell his campaign manager, Patrick Kinsella, about the CN bid for B.C. Rail?

Hon. M. de Jong: The matters referred to by the member are before the courts.

Mr. Speaker: Member has a supplemental.

ROLE OF PATRICK KINSELLA IN ACCENTURE CONTRACT

B. Ralston: Will the member opposite explain: what was the respective role of Martyn Brown in the Premier's office and Mr. Kinsella in the Accenture deal, the awarding of a contract of \$1.4 billion to Accenture and the sale of one-third of the operations of B.C. Hydro?

Hon. M. de Jong: I'll take the question on notice.

ROLE OF PATRICK KINSELLA AND PREMIER'S OFFICE IN B.C. RAIL SALE

S. Simpson: Hon. Speaker, the matters that are before the courts will be dealt with by Justice Bennett there. The matter that is before....

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Interjections.

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

S. Simpson: The matter that is before this chamber is the integrity of the Premier's office, the highest office in this.... We know that the Premier's chief adviser, Mr. Kinsella, is now up to his knees in this. We now know from today that Martyn Brown was a key adviser on this. We have to believe that the Premier knew about this.

So the question to the government is this. If this government cares one whit about its integrity, if it cares one whit about the integrity of the Premier's office, it will tell us today: what was the role of the Premier's office? What was the role of Martyn Brown, and what was the role of Patrick Kinsella? Anything less is more cover-up by the Liberals trying to cover up their past.

[1425]

Hon. M. de Jong: The member may choose to be selective about what aspects of an independent judiciary he chooses to respect. I will not.

Mr. Speaker: The member has a supplemental.

S. Simpson: Last time I checked, the Premier wasn't under investigation by the courts, unless somebody over there wants to tell us different. This is about the Premier's office. This is about the conduct of the government.

You've been hiding and hiding from this, hiding behind this court case, refusing to talk to British Columbians. It's time for some honesty on that side — just once, an honest statement, an honest answer. This borders on corruption. Where is it? Answer the question.

Mr. Speaker: Member. Member.

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.
Member, I'm not going to allow those statements again. Will you please withdraw those words that you just said.

S. Simpson: I withdraw.

J. Kwan: The issue of integrity and public trust may not matter very much on the government side, but it matters very much to British Columbians.

Interjections.

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

J. Kwan: British Columbians deserve answers. The integrity and trust of the Premier and the Premier's office are in question. Today we learned that the Premier's friend and insider, campaign manager for the Liberal Party, Patrick Kinsella, was working with the Premier's chief of staff, Martyn Brown, to assist CN in this corrupt deal.

What instructions from the Premier did Martyn Brown give to Patrick Kinsella? Will the government now tell British Columbians the real truth?

Hon. M. de Jong: I realize that it may be inconvenient for the opposition, an opposition increasingly desperate at this point in time, to await the proper unfolding of a judicial proceeding. I realize that that may not fit within...

Interjections.

Mr. Speaker: Members.

Hon. M. de Jong: ...the narrow scope of their political agenda. But respect for concepts and principles as basic as an independent judiciary require us to do just that, and await the outcome of a trial that is before the Supreme Court of British Columbia. That's what we intend to do.

J. Kwan: What's inconvenient is for this government to tell the truth to British Columbians on what exactly happened between Patrick Kinsella, Martyn Brown and the Premier and the CN-B.C. Rail deal. That's exactly what's inconvenient.

The fact is that the integrity and public trust of the Premier's office, of this government and of the Premier ought to be paramount. That should be the guiding principle which this government should use to lead their answers.

Let me just quote again, Mr. Speaker. "Patrick Kinsella received a call from David McLean, who in essence told him the deal was at risk. Anything they could do would be appreciated and, in CN's view, needed now. Kinsella is talking to Martyn for immediate support." That's a direct quote.

What support was given to CN through Patrick Kinsella? Tell this House and tell British Columbians the truth.

[1430]

Hon. M. de Jong: The opposition's persistence in pursuing this line of inappropriate questioning is surpassed only by the vigour with which we on this side of the House will defend the principle of an independent judiciary.

[End of question period.]

D. Thorne: Leave to present a petition, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

Petitions

D. Thorne: I have a petition here with 1,440 signatures to add to the almost 13,000 already presented regarding the Riverview lands — to keep the Riverview lands in public hands, with no market housing added.

B. Simpson: I seek leave to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

B. Simpson: I am presenting a petition on behalf of logging contractors and residents of logging roads in Cariboo North asking that the government do not allow wider logging bunks to be permitted on our forestry roads and the public roads in north Cariboo.

R. Austin: I seek leave to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

R. Austin: On behalf of the Pacific Coast Wild Salmon Society, I have here 9,758 signatures from people all over British Columbia requesting that the government of British Columbia work with the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to apply the Fisheries Act to the salmon-farming industry here in British Columbia.

N. Simons: I have a petition which I'm presenting from residents of Gambier Island, Keats Island and a number of other islands in the Howe Sound and area who are asking that route 13, the *Stormaway* dock be available for people to use for business, tourism and residential use.

K. Conroy: I, too, have a petition from over 100 constituents from Trail — low-income constituents who are disabled that are asking for an increase to their housing allowance.

D. Routley: I rise to present a petition.

Mr. Speaker: Proceed.

D. Routley: This is a petition signed by dozens, in fact, a couple of hundred residents of Honeymoon Bay — which is pretty much all of Honeymoon Bay — to have the government act to stabilize the water course of both Sutton Creek and Ashburnham Creek in Honeymoon Bay to protect them from flooding and protect their drinking water.

Mr. Speaker: Another one?

D. Routley: Also, Mr. Speaker, another petition signed by constituents demanding that they have the right to know what's in their food and what toxic substances are in their communities.

Orders of the Day

Hon. M. de Jong: I call throne speech debate.

Throne Speech Debate

(continued)

M. Karagianis: I am pleased today to stand and take this opportunity to speak to the throne speech that was made here in the House.

I anticipate that this may be the last opportunity I have before this House is dissolved and we go to an election to speak to both my staff and my constituents to thank them very much for the great honour that it has been to serve as the MLA for Esquimalt-Metchosin for the past four years.

I have had the great good fortune to have some amazing staff working with me over the past four years, and I would like to offer a special thanks to them today.

[K. Whittred in the chair.]

Lawrence Herzog in my constituency office is not only a tremendously close friend but an amazing staff person, and I know for a fact I could not be doing this job without him.

I would also like to thank Jayne Ducker, who also works in my office — my constituency assistant. She is the other component of my constituency work that is essential to my success. Both of them are tireless, hard workers. They do an exceptional job, and I know that my constituents also would offer the same accolades to them. I hear often from constituents on what a really tremendous job they both do on behalf of me in the community office.

I'd also like to thank Teresa Scambler, who's my legislative assistant and who assists me daily, with great good humour, and offers friendship as well.

[1435]

Those three people are pretty critical to my day-to-day life, and I really do count myself fortunate that they are friends, that they are fun, that they are smart and savvy people. That helps me do my job in a better way.

I would like to just reiterate to the constituents of Esquimalt-Metchosin what an enormous honour it has been for the past four years to serve you. As we move forward into the election, I will certainly be talking with you on your doorsteps and, hopefully, will have an opportunity to represent you in the future again here in this House.

I think that together in Esquimalt-Metchosin we have over the last four years done some really terrific things.

We have had a great number of opportunities to stand up on behalf of the issues that concern all of us in my community.

We've had some great success with things like preserving the first nations midden in View Royal. The government was gracious enough to give me some supportive funding there to help with that.

Craigflower Manor. I know that the government has acknowledged my request for some funding there to help further protect Craigflower Manor in the future, after its fire. I have thanked the fire department in View Royal and the various partners there. I recently had an opportunity to talk with them, and I know that they appreciated acknowledgment of their role in saving that building.

We've had some other terrific opportunities here, as well, to stand up for the community.

It was a great pleasure for me to submit a private member's bill on behalf of the first nations across the lower Island and, in fact, across British Columbia here and to offer up a legislative policy and bill that would help protect not only the sites that are identified currently but sacred sites and caves and many of the other cultural components that have not been protected well under current government policy. Hopefully, we'll have a chance to put that through into real legislation at some point in the future.

I also would like to thank those members of my community that fought so hard to save Lampson School, and I was happy to stand with them. They are a courageous group of parents. I regret that we weren't as successful there as we could have been, but we at least have the school still remaining on that property. It hasn't been sold off, and we will perhaps live to fight again on that.

I think that we've had some limited success, as well, with getting audits on our hospital and on some of our seniors facilities. We've drawn attention to the outcome of privatization here in our facilities in our community — the cleanliness issues, the poor food. That continues to be an issue that plagues the community.

When I looked at the throne speech and its foreshadowing of what the budget would hold, I realized that once again we in Esquimalt-Metchosin would be somewhat disappointed by the things that had been left out for our community. You know, we've had eight years now of this government, and we have seen what the priorities of the government have been. They've been very clear. Consistently, the communities that lie within my constituency have been overlooked and have been ignored by the government, and that's sad to say.

When the throne speech was read this year, again I looked for some of the things that my community has consistently asked for, that I've stood in this House and asked for, that I've stood up in community forums and talked about — the things that we very much need. Once again those things were missing from the throne speech and subsequent budget. So it seems to me that there is

still much work to do in order to get for my community the kind of attention that they need and to get the kinds of facilities that they need.

Clearly, we need two new schools in the Western Communities. This has continued to be an issue that has plagued us over and over again. When I hear discussion within the throne speech and budget about what can be promised for communities for the future, I just have to look in my own community to say that the lack of these schools is a hardship that my community is very concerned about and once again is mounting a very, very concerted campaign to try and lobby for a successful outcome of building those two schools.

[1440]

The E&N Railway continues to be a topic that I know has been brought up in this House time and time again — sadly, no mention in the throne speech and no indication that there would be the kind of investment, small and very effective investment, that would go to the heart of what my community wants in the way of commuter rail options here on the south Island. For eight years we've been waiting for some kind of acknowledgment of some transportation solutions. Sadly, again, that was not forthcoming in this throne speech.

It's the same with the kind of transit expansion that is needed here in the lower Island. I can't help but stand with my community and sympathize with their views and very real feelings that things like the E&N commuter corridor and expanded transit here have continued to be overlooked by the government, while my community has watched announcements of megaprojects across the Lower Mainland — huge Olympics projects, very expensive cost overruns on things like the convention centre.

The community looks at the kind of investment that would be required to get the E&N transportation corridor up and functioning as a commuter rail option. It seems like such a small, inconsequential number compared with what the government has spent on things like the convention centre or the new roof on B.C. Place. That leaves an eight-year impression within my community that somehow, here on the south Island, we will continue to be overlooked by a government that is really out of touch with what my community needs.

I hear over and over again on the doorstep from families that affordability is their number one concern and that things like child care, a raise in the minimum wage and a change in fee structure for things like B.C. Ferries would go a long way to making their lives a lot easier.

Instead, we have a government that has continued for eight years to refuse categorically to raise the minimum wage. We couldn't, apparently, raise it in good times here in the province of British Columbia. Now, as we head into some economic turmoil and some difficult times, again the government has got an excuse for not raising the minimum wage. My community knows what kind of effect that has on them, on their families

and on their ability to feel comfort in getting from payday to payday.

Instead, my community continues to have great concerns about the cost of shelter, about the cost of child care, about the availability of child care so that two parents can get out and work, and generally about the government's lack of attention to the things that are most meaningful to them.

Instead, they have now been given a gas tax to add to the cost of their lives. Everywhere they turn, things are more expensive. There are more fees. Over and over again the government has found more ways to reach into the pockets of my constituents. Whether it's increased ferry fares, whether it's the growing cost of B.C. Hydro, whether it is this gas tax, clearly the constituents here in my community — and, I guess, across the entire south Island, and perhaps across British Columbia — are seeing that for eight years the priorities of this government have played out and have just cost families more and more.

I know that I hear regularly from my constituents, as well, the concerns that they have about the budget and about the throne speech, about what was laid out in the throne speech here. They simply don't address in any real way the concerns and needs and issues that they have in their daily lives. They saw nothing in the throne speech that said and spoke to them about their growing concern about affordability, about their growing concern about things like education, opportunities for their children.

We continue to see crowded classrooms. I spoke earlier about the fight to save Lampson School. That was closed down, in the heart of my community. Over and over again I hear from families that as well as the issue of shelter and affordability — the costs of living in their daily lives, with hydro and extra fees and all of that — there is the growing concern about affordability for post-secondary education.

[1445]

I think every family raising a young person here in British Columbia has the same hopes and expectations for their children that we all do — that our children will be able to take the opportunities offered to them, get the education that they are entitled to and go on to live enriched lives, become the economic driving engine for the future and be able to live fulfilled and happy lives.

Over and over again I hear from families that say the burden of post-secondary education tuition costs are leaving more and more young people burdened for so many years into their lives that it either discourages them from getting an education or it takes them longer to get an education or else families have to think about that as yet one more cost that they need to cover in order to ensure that their family gets the opportunities that they are entitled to.

There is this continued impression and, I believe, a very real impression across my constituency that the pri-

orities of government have not represented the people in my community who are struggling every day to make sure that they can look after their parents, that they can get from payday to payday with some ease, that their kids can have a good opportunity for education and for post-secondary education.

We know that the lack of home care in my constituency has continued to be a huge issue for my constituents. The lack of publicly owned and run affordable long-term care for seniors is very much an issue that I hear about very often in my community.

Within the throne speech there was not much comfort for my constituents that those things would be addressed that concern them the most.

I do also hear a very real and growing concern about the giveaway of the resources of British Columbia through the government's continued privatization of our resources. Often I hear from people a very real concern about how much of our future is going to be given away long before our children have an opportunity to have their voice heard in it.

This privatization that has gone on for the past eight years and continues to carry on, creeping across all aspects of our water, our hydro, our forest lands and certainly things like the privatization of MSP premiums. Today we see once again some very real concerns about how this privatization has been carried out, about what the implications are for how the government has done its business in secret behind closed doors.

So when my constituents stand up and say they have a real concern about the resources that have been either privatized, sold off or given away over the last eight years, those are very real concerns. Those are bona fide concerns, and there is enough evidence available here to make everyone very concerned.

I hear from my constituents, and they say that it's time to take back B.C. and make sure that the resources of British Columbia are here for the residents and citizens of British Columbia, for the future, for young people growing up in British Columbia, so that we don't end up with no future at the end of the day.

Nothing in the throne speech here indicated in any way that this government is going to give up this pursuit of privatization schemes or its continuing to whittle away at things like our water resources through independent power projects and through, I think, really rash decisions around how they are allowing B.C. Hydro to manage our future resources.

Certainly, one of the things that continues to be a huge concern for my constituents — and, I guess, will continue to be a mystery for some time — is, of course, the B.C. Rail corruption trial that's ongoing right now and what the implications have been in that.

One of the largest giveaways of a resource here in British Columbia was the B.C. Rail sell-off. It continues to be in the news daily, and I expect it will be for some

time. Certainly, constituents in my community want to know what that's all about. I get asked all the time: "When is that going to be resolved? When are the citizens of British Columbia going to know exactly what that was all about?"

We watched, here in British Columbia, several really monumental events take place that we did not think we would see in the history of this province. Yet in the past eight years we have had two very, very monumental events take place.

[1450]

For one, we had a government that got itself elected saying they wouldn't sell off one of the major resources here in this province, the B.C. Rail, and then promptly, within a very short time, broke that promise and sold B.C. Rail off at a premium.

As it turns out, Madam Speaker, often you look back in history and realize how cheaply a thing was sold off. We saw that happen. So a huge broken promise here to the citizens of British Columbia, and then hot on the heels of that a few years later, what do we see but again something unexpected and unanticipated and historic, which was a raid on this very place — this Legislature, the seat of government. That's sort of the highest pinnacle of governance here in the province of British Columbia — I guess the place where you expect to uphold the laws.

We make the laws. This is the place where it all stops. The buck ultimately stops here. What did we see? We saw a raid on the Legislature, and we saw police taking boxes of files out of this place. We have yet to see what, in fact, was at the heart of that raid. We have yet to find out and have revealed to us the full ramifications and issues lying at the heart of the sale of B.C. Rail.

Citizens have a right to know. They have been asking that question, and rightfully so. They do have the right to know what has occurred here when one of the primary resources of this province was sold off despite a promise that it wouldn't be. Then there was a raid. Now there's a huge trial that's been going on for year after year after year.

My constituents ask often: "What's going to happen with that trial? What is going on there? What's at the heart of that? What really happened? Will we ever hear? And more importantly, will we ever get back that huge resource that we basically gave away?"

I've talked often in this House about what I believe is the squandering of resources here under the privatization schemes of this government. I have certainly talked often about the things that I know my community wants and has not received from a government that has demonstrated clearly that they're out of touch with the needs of my community, that they're not interested.

They're prepared to completely neglect the needs of my community, such as long-term care beds, such as a rail corridor that is used for commuters. We see consistently over and over again that the government has dem-

onstrated that they are prepared to just let those things be left unanswered and unfulfilled.

Instead, the focus has been on Olympics projects, on the Lower Mainland, on megaprojects and privatization, much of which I think is highly questionable. You only have to look at the recent news articles as they've appeared.

I read today in the *Globe and Mail* all kinds of questionable evidence coming forward about privatization, about how it is failing and why it is failing, about the ties of privatization and private borrowing and corporate borrowing policies and how they are intrinsically involved in and tied to the recent economic crash in the U.S. economy.

Many of the things that are at the heart of the current economic turmoil are the things that this government has consistently put forth and continued to adhere to, such as privatization, such as deregulation. All of these things now I believe are being found to be, in fact, not in the public interest.

I absolutely believe in, as do the constituents that talk with me regularly, public ownership of public resources here in the province of British Columbia. In the throne speech I saw no indication whatsoever that the government was prepared to go back to a time when we had great pride in British Columbia. We owned the resources. They were used for the welfare and best interests of the residents of this province, and they stayed in the hands of the public so that generation after generation could in fact benefit and enjoy the fruits of those resources.

[1455]

I'm taking an opportunity to stand up for my community, Madam Speaker, and this is the last opportunity for me to talk here in this House about the things that I think are most important, which I hear daily from my constituents are most important. I think it's very clear. The government has shown us eight years of what they've been up to and what they think is important. It's not the things that my community has been asking for. It's not the things that my community and constituents think are important. In fact, the things that they think are important have been overlooked and ignored.

I cannot help but say that if the government is too arrogant to listen to its people, then, in fact, they will probably hear from voters here in a couple of weeks about what it is that voters really have felt and thought. I know the government often stands up and talks with great pride about its success, of things like its privatization, with great fanfare about the megaprojects that it's been involved in — although I don't hear as much bragging about the convention centre anymore, as we used to.

It would seem to me that we have an opportunity here in British Columbia to move forward after eight years of a government that is arrogant and out of touch with people's needs. We have an opportunity now to look towards a better future, to make some determining steps here on a way to take back British Columbia for

British Columbians, to make sure that we take back our resources, that we bring back into public hands those things best managed by the public.

That is, things like our water. A very vital part of the privatization battle that's going on in this province right now is about water.

Certainly, B.C. Hydro. It has been a hugely successful model, the envy, I think, of governments across the world. We've watched it be dismantled and now undermined by independent power projects that will force us in the future.... In our lifetime and certainly in our children and grandchildren's lifetime, if they are allowed to run free as this government would have them, we'll be buying back our power from foreign owners at a premium. That's just wrong. That is just fundamentally wrong.

Again, I speak to the fact that British Columbians would like to take back their province and ensure that our resources stay here in British Columbia for ourselves, for our future generations.

We need to make sure that we have a government that is in touch with what people need and want in their communities and is willing to stand up for that. That includes such things as public health care.

We've watched the slow erosion of our health care system here and much privatization that's crept in. We've seen some fairly, I think, lame arguments against it. We've seen some fairly lame attempts to halt it. Every day we see it creeping in more and more, and I expect that we're going to see the topic of privatization in health care be played out in the coming election. This government has not stood up for public health care, and I think it's time that the citizens of British Columbia had someone who would stand up for health care.

This government has not stood up for affordable education. Far from it. We have raised tuition fees. We have made it more and more difficult for young people to get an education and come away without a huge burden of debt. I think it's time that this province and the citizens of this province had a government that would stand up for affordable post-secondary education and make sure that every young person had the opportunity to fulfil their dreams and to fulfil their educational opportunities and to make sure that they will be financially successful in the future by having a good education.

I believe that it's time for the citizens of British Columbia to have a government that would stand up for seniors care, for affordable seniors care and home care. The erosion of home care has continued to be a barrier for so many seniors staying at home, living healthier, longer, more productive lives before they are forced into the health care system as either patients through emergency or needing a much more intensive form of long-term care, because we haven't got those kinds of resources there.

This has not been a government that's stood up for seniors in that way. I think it's time for seniors to have

a government that would stand up for them and say: "We believe in health care. We believe in long-term care. We believe in actually putting those provisions in your community where you need them so you can stay living in your community."

We don't believe in separating seniors so that in their last years they are forced to live outside of their community, away from their family. We've seen more and more of that from this government over the last eight years, and I haven't seen a government ready to stand up and say: "We are going to stand up for seniors. We are going to stand up for home care." Those are things that are really important to my constituents.

[1500]

I talked about privatization, about taking back British Columbia. We need to have a government here that will stand up for British Columbians and for our future resources and say: "Yes, we believe in keeping the resources of British Columbia in British Columbia, in British Columbians' hands, and making sure that we benefit first and foremost."

The models that we have had for B.C. Hydro and even for ICBC and treating our ferry system like part of the highway system have served us well in the past. They have made part of the backbone of this province based on that — that we believe those resources are ours, that they should benefit us first. But we don't have a government that's prepared to stand up for that.

In fact, this government has allowed B.C. Hydro to be dismantled piece by piece. They took very effective steps to do that. They've allowed independent power producers to come in now and begin to create power that will be sold back to us at a premium. No longer will British Columbians benefit from having affordable hydro costs because they own those resources and those are public and kept in public hands. The government has not stood up for that, and I think it is time to have a government that would stand up for that.

I think it's time, in fact, that the people of British Columbia had a government that would stand up for them first and foremost — not for corporations, not for friends and insiders, not for the big corporate agenda of privatization. I think it's time that British Columbians had someone that would stand up for them, that would listen to them, that would listen to their needs and make sure that in fact they're the first consideration here in government policy and government action. We haven't had that for eight years.

I believe it's time for a change here in British Columbia. I know I hear from my constituents that it's time. It's been a great privilege to serve them for the last four years. I hope to be able to do that again. I know I'll stand up for my community. I'll continue to do that in this House.

Madam Speaker, it's been a great privilege and pleasure to have this last opportunity to address my constituents. I look forward to May 13.

H. Bloy: Thank you, hon. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to stand up and reply to the throne speech today.

I can say that it's been truly an honour, as I've heard many members from all sides of the House talk about serving the people in their communities. I have truly enjoyed my eight years here. I'm looking forward to another four years. But none of this could ever be done without the support of family and friends and extended family, and I'm no exception.

I wouldn't have been able to do this without the support of my wife Anita and our children — my son Jeremy and his wife Jennifer and now our grandson James, who is quite an amazing little boy at 11 months of age. He's walking and running. Not quite, but we're working on it, anyway. I have my daughter Katie and Travis and my daughter Candice and Dave.

There's all the extended family that come to support you, which only allows you to do this. Many people don't realize the hours that all MLAs put in to do this job. It's pretty horrendous. I kind of split up my hours by telling people that I spend one-third of the time in Victoria. You spend one-third of your time in your constituency office, and you spend one-third of your time out at social events. Sometimes we get lots of food. It's not always the food we need, but we do get lots of food at different times.

This was really expressed by the member for Okanagan-Vernon when he talked about his family and his eight years in the House, when he spoke the other day. I would like to acknowledge all the people who won't be coming back, who have decided to step down. There's always a time to move on, and there's a time for family.

We have the members for Kamloops, for Bulkley Valley–Stikine, for North Vancouver–Lonsdale, for Delta South, for Kelowna–Mission, for Richmond Centre, for Okanagan–Westside, for Okanagan–Vernon, for North Vancouver–Seymour and for Kelowna–Lake Country — people who have dedicated the last number of years to serving all British Columbians, not just the people in their riding.

[1505]

A lot of people find that hard to believe. They say that you're elected from a riding, so you should only be there. But you have to make decisions that are based on what's best for the whole province. That's what I like to do, because I feel very proud to be part of the team for the last eight years and to be part of this team in government that has brought economic stability to the province of British Columbia. I consider that a real honour.

What the government is doing to protect people and services during these trying economic times.... We are working to ensure that we can do our best for the people of Burnaby and the province. This means creating jobs, stimulating local economies, protecting the services that individuals and families need most, embracing the

diversity of the province while moving into the future.

While doing this, I could only have done it with the support from my constituency office. I've had different people work for me over the last eight years — Lesley, Richard Geddo, Jennifer Duke — and now I have Mike Lee as a constituency assistant. I have Sahara Jerome, who is a co-op student from SFU. I've had a number of co-op students from SFU. A few of them are Amy Ng, Chanel Jen and Christina Jung. In Victoria I've had the assistance of Katy Fairley to help me stay on track.

Part of my riding was Coquitlam. With the boundary changes, I'll just be in Burnaby. But in Coquitlam I've met a number of people that I've felt I've been able to work with over the years. I've had an open-arms reception from all of them.

I hope and believe that the work I've done with many groups has made the community better, from the new renovated library that's opening, and from working with Joanne Granek at SHARE Family and Community Services, who provide such a vital link to the citizens most in need in the city of Coquitlam. It's been an amazing experience to work with them and be able to assist them, but they're the ones that do all the work.

Then there are some business people in the community that have a huge heart and a pretty good pocketbook, and they help out at lots of events. We have Bill Dick, Jim Allard, Colleen Talbot and Ken Woodward. I'm sorry that I've just mentioned a few names, because there are hundreds of names of people that come out and support every day. I can see lots of the people. I don't always remember all their names. But when I go to the different events, whether it's the regular hospice event or for the hospital or for the emergency phone lines, the same people are there supporting their community day in and day out.

One of the things with the city of Coquitlam that I've been working on over the last few years, and a really receptive one, is setting up a twinning relationship with the city of Coquitlam and the city of Paju in Korea. I first met the delegation about two and a half years ago. The mayor came over to Coquitlam when Maxine Wilson was mayor. Now with Richard Stewart, the new mayor of the city of Coquitlam, Paju is coming again this May. I believe that we're at the point where they're going to sign an agreement, a recognition between the two cities.

I find this exciting, because in Coquitlam is the largest concentration of Koreans in British Columbia. In British Columbia we have over 60,000 Koreans now living here and 30,000 students at any one time, nearly a hundred thousand Koreans. The centre of their shopping universe is the centre of my old riding on North Road.

So I'm really excited. I know the people of Coquitlam are excited. I'm asked on a regular basis: "When is this twinning going to happen? We're so proud that the city of Coquitlam is moving ahead with this." I'm proud of it too. I'm looking forward to it. It will be later in May when that will happen.

The throne speech is more than just goals and more than just a vision. It will be a reality for British Columbians. We will emerge from the economic downturn faster and stronger than others, and we have all the pieces to make it happen. I can say that British Columbia in particular, along with Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, is best suited in this downturn to recover faster than anyone.

[1510]

It's the strong economic presence and leadership that we've shown through the last eight years that will allow us to take this next step. But there is no denying that the economy is the number one issue for the residents of Burnaby and British Columbia. It's the economy, the economy.

Along with Budget 2009, the throne speech for 2009 provides relief and security for all British Columbians. The government has committed to protecting basic services, and in demonstrating that commitment, we have made immediate investments in infrastructure now. This means jobs and economic stimulus as British Columbians need it now.

This is about jobs and families — the economy. In times of economic downturn, we look to the projects which provide families.... These come from more than just government. We have agencies like Burnaby Family Life that supports individuals and families through Burnaby with counselling work and child development programs that help individuals in these tough economic times. The Burnaby Family Life Institute led by Jeanne Fike, her board of directors and all the people that work there is an amazing department.

We have international programs like the Red Cross, whose efforts in China after the Sichuan earthquake not only provided \$2 million for children; they demonstrated to the world what a difference working together can make. I've worked with the Red Cross over a number of years. I was able to bring \$500,000 from the government as part of a \$3 million fundraising program for their new office in Burnaby, which was able to stabilize it. They stabilized the building — seismic upgrades.

They were able to put in computers, and they were able to have large meeting rooms where in times of emergency the wires literally dropped out of the ceiling and were hooked up to computers and phone lines. This is thanks to Telus Corp., who led the way with a \$1.6 million donation of this technology to make it work. It's pretty amazing — the work that the Red Cross does. On that fundraising campaign, it was great to work with Peter Simpson, Peter Legg and Susan Borthwick, who is the executive director of the Red Cross.

Getting back to the throne speech of 2009, it upholds the idea of community service and development by supporting families, creating opportunities and injecting much-needed stimulus into the economy. This comes from projects such as the Evergreen line, which I have supported from the very beginning. I've been there

for the Evergreen line from the talking — before I was elected — about the route that it should take and where it should go. We've let the professionals do that. It is certainly working now.

This 11-kilometre line will run from Lougheed Town Centre in Burnaby to Coquitlam town centre and Douglas College in Coquitlam. Douglas College came to me early in the process, and they said: "You know, we have this brand-new building, the David Lam building at Douglas College in Coquitlam, but we can't get all the students there where every other place is filling up." They said: "It's too far away. Our New Westminster campus is full. We need this Evergreen line to go right to Douglas College so students can split some of the courses."

They were trying everything. I was able to work with TransLink and the president of Douglas College to make that happen. It's one of the neat achievements that happens — that really happens — which creates a real meaningful difference in what goes on in our communities, and what they want.

This new line — they've already opened the project office for it. It's ready to go. It will create 8,000 new direct and indirect jobs.

As we talk about the downturn in the economy, it's the government that has come forward with this economic plan, with this investment in the infrastructure — with 8,000 good-paying new jobs in British Columbia direct and indirect. This is a commitment for moving people and goods fast or reducing travel time, connecting people, taking cars off the roadways so commercial traffic can move.

In addition to investing in the infrastructure, we are investing in people. So \$18 million has been invested for the Royal Canadian Legion in South Burnaby No. 83, their housing society. This will create a 70-bed care facility.

[1515]

There's one individual from the South Burnaby legion who I've gotten to know over the years through my connections in scouting. His name is Tom Stewart. He's an amazing person. He's a veteran. He goes out to the schools to talk to children about the war and his experiences. I see him pop up at Stoney Creek Elementary School. There was an old mural that was first put up to have the name of the school and the creek that runs behind it, and here he is working with a number of students to revitalize this mural.

Tom has been everywhere, and I just have total respect for what he has done in the community — not only for what he gave us by serving in the Armed Forces and for allowing me the opportunity to stand here and speak today, but what he's done for the citizens.

This new project will create jobs now and provide care in the long term. Creating jobs and supporting families and stimulating the economy is more than all of this as well. It comes from innovation — innovation like the project I brought to the attention of the House on

February 9, the introduction or the thought process for a gondola going to Simon Fraser University. So you may go out on a sightseeing tourist trip around the city, and you'll be able to take a SkyTrain, a boat and now a gondola up to the top of Burnaby Mountain where Simon Fraser University is situated; where UniverCity, the new community up there, is situated; and where Burnaby Mountain park with Horizons Restaurant is situated — all just a short few steps away.

The gondola was developed by Gordon Harris, the president and CEO of UniverCity. I can tell you it's going through an economic review right now with engineers and that. So I'm looking forward to the final results and being able to ride up to SFU on the gondola.

The previously budgeted increase for health and education will be protected. We said that, and 90 percent of all new dollars that this government takes in, in revenue goes towards health care.

Health care is so vital. I'll be 63 next month, but I guess that's really 43 in the new element of the world. I certainly don't feel my age. I remember when someone told me that they were 63; I didn't know how old that was. I was so young. But now, what can you do?

As I said yesterday in the House, we're going to benefit in Burnaby from a \$4.85 million investment in a new MRI at Burnaby Hospital through the Life Can't Wait campaign. This funding came from the community. There were Keith and Betty Beedie, who donated \$1.35 million to the campaign in the first dollars, and they wanted it matched. We went to \$2.65 million, and the rest of the community came up with \$2 million. It was led by Robert Bosa, the builder who went out, and whatever he did, he was able to help raise the money.

There are not only people like Robert Bosa in Burnaby, but there are people like that in every community around the province. We do truly live in the best place on earth. Since I've been elected, I've met people that are just amazing. They don't want their name in the news or the public. They are out there fundraising and supporting their communities. There are no political ties. They don't want the building named after them. They want a community that they're proud to live in and that their family will be proud to live in. This happens in every corner of this great province.

The Burnaby Hospital Foundation is led by Rahim Rajan, a local business person in Burnaby who donates so much time to the hospital. Besides running his business, he has a young family. I think he has two children. I've seen pictures of them on his desk. This isn't the only fundraising event or the only charity that he supports. He supports many charities in the province, so it makes you proud.

I'm fortunate I've been elected and have been in this beautiful building and the history that's here. But I get to say thank you a lot, which I truly mean, to the people of

this province, the people who volunteer and who really make our communities what they are.

[1520]

So 90 percent of all new budget dollars coming in goes to health care, but this includes developments for nursing programs and science facilities promoting research and training. This happens because we've added 3,000 new nursing spaces since 2001 — eight years. Now we're starting to see the benefits of this, where they're starting to graduate nurses.

We're starting to see some of the benefits from doubling our investment in training new doctors from the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. It's now been expanded to the University of Northern British Columbia, and it will soon be going to the Interior, where we're going to have more medical schools.

Wasn't it great in Prince George when some of the first doctors graduated a few years ago? I can't remember the exact number who graduated, but I heard someone say to me: "How come only half of them stayed there?" It wasn't quite half.

I said: "Wow, isn't that fantastic? We got eight new doctors who just graduated in Prince George and want to live there." It's the positive side and the way that you look at it.

Something else that I've been proud to be part of over the last few years is working with the Association of International Medical Doctors. When we first came to power, there were only six residency spaces a year. We've had that tripled to 18. I'm still working to triple that again, because I believe that residencies should be opened up more and more. We have such talent in British Columbia that's not always put to best use.

I'm pleased that I was part of that committee, and I worked with a former colleague of mine in the House, Lorne Mayencourt. We worked with the association, and we worked with the Ministry of Health. A couple of years ago we were able to also announce that any British Columbian here that goes to a foreign medical school and comes back will get a chance to go into residency.

We also announced that if you have a medical licence anywhere in Canada, you'll now be able to practise in British Columbia. This never happened before, because of unknown reasons. I'm proud to say that I was part of this — that we're starting to open up more ways of bringing people into British Columbia. We've started a new three-year nursing program, and there have just been so many benefits.

As we move on, it's not only health care. It's in education from K-to-12. We've increased the per-student funding basically every year since we've been elected, and now it's over \$8,200 — the highest ever in the history of British Columbia. This all comes at a time when student enrolment is decreasing in most of British Columbia. When you look at that decrease, the individual boards of education are all getting more money today.

We're opening up more spaces in education. In my riding alone, we built one brand-new school, Alderson Elementary School. We replaced the old wooden structure that had been there for the 80 years before. We are building a new school on top of Burnaby Mountain. We're building a new high school in Burnaby, the second new high school that's been there. We've done seismic upgrading on so many buildings.

But it's not only the investment. It's not just about funding students. It's about reinvesting in our schools, creating jobs and benefiting the local economy. These investments in infrastructure and schools create jobs and build opportunities.

I've spoken before about the \$102 million to seismically upgrade or replace Coquitlam schools. This translates into approximately 650 jobs through the life of these projects. It goes directly to benefiting Coquitlam schools like Maillard, Porter and Miller Park.

It's all about the economy. It's all about jobs and families, and that's what we're creating by this investment in infrastructure. In Burnaby there are six schools slated to receive seismic upgrading — Cariboo elementary school.

There's the new school I've spoken about quite a bit at UniverCity. I have to say the new school at UniverCity was a cooperative approach.

[1525]

I was getting lots of calls and e-mails from new families that had moved into UniverCity and from some of the people who work up on top of Burnaby Mountain, saying: "We need a school up here." Something like 165 to 185 students were being driven off the hill every morning.

I went to the school board. I went to the Ministry of Education. We talked, and we were able to come up with a cooperative approach. The Burnaby school board agreed that they needed a new school up there. The funding wasn't always there, but they chipped in \$1.25 million. The developers at UniverCity put in \$1.25 million. Then the university gave the land on a 99-year lease, and then the province of British Columbia came in with over \$6 million to make it a reality.

I will be there in September 2010 when this new school opens. It has space for 275 elementary students, including 40 kindergarten students. It was great to see a project, and it's by working cooperatively. I believe that's the benefit of our government — how we have worked in the community with all the cities around the province to make things happen. It shows the leadership that we have in our government here.

Funding for advanced education will be increased. New capital investments will create jobs and provide essential upgrades and new space for B.C. colleges and universities in partnership with the federal government. I can tell you from firsthand experience of what's happened at Simon Fraser University and the investments that we've made up there in the health sciences.

A number of years ago we promised 25,000 new seats for advanced education in the province of British Columbia. But we didn't just announce the 25,000 new seats and say: "Wow, that's great. They can get 25,000 more." We actually built the buildings so we could house them, so that they could sit down.

The latest building to open at Simon Fraser University was Blusson Hall in the health sciences, just an amazing new building that opened this past September. A year ago we opened a new residence up at Simon Fraser University — a new cafeteria and new benefits for students up there.

As we go on, the province will expand supportive housing to combat homelessness and to shelter those with mental illness. That housing will be supported by a new integrated personalized homelessness intervention strategy and a new community safety strategy. This includes Burnaby Centre for Mental Health and Addictions, which just celebrated its one-year anniversary, and \$1.2 billion in one-time capital investments with \$14 million annually.

That's a lot of money, but we're doing this to help the homelessness and the addiction in Burnaby. It's a step at a time. This 100-bed facility promotes education, health and medical care and training. Patients can receive dual treatment for health and addiction. One of the problems with addiction and homelessness is the multiple barriers.

We've done lots of work in the province, and I have to thank our Minister of Housing for coming out and supporting projects like Habitat for Humanity. They finished the third of four phases of the Habitat for Humanity project in the city of Burnaby, and I've been there from the very beginning. I can tell you I haven't swung a hammer yet. My wife is afraid when I get a hammer, but I've been there. I've seen the work that they've been doing. I've met the people living in them.

Just in the last six months the Minister of Housing came out and said: "This is a viable alternative to housing in British Columbia." He was able to assist Habitat for Humanity for the province, not just for this one riding, for this one city and this one project. He is helping the whole province. He has a plan to make housing affordable and attainable for all the people in British Columbia.

B.C. has identified \$2 billion worth of infrastructure projects for the next three years and has submitted proposals for nearly 400 projects to the federal government for cost-sharing.

[1530]

A further \$10.6 billion is approved. Capital projects are scheduled for construction in the next three years. That's \$10.6 billion of approved projects in construction for the next three years, and an additional \$1.4 billion worth of local infrastructure projects also will be built.

This represents a total of \$14 billion in new and ongoing public capital construction and 88,000 jobs

throughout the province — 88,000 jobs for British Columbians and for their families. That's because we want British Columbians to stay here and to live here and not to look elsewhere.

These projects include the Gateway program. This not only invests in jobs and moving people and goods, but it opens up the province to all of Canada and the world. The Gateway project.... If you've seen the big tractor-trailers, that's what we're talking about — bringing goods and services to British Columbians. Well, Vancouver, British Columbia — the Pacific Ocean — is the gateway to all of Canada.

I see that my time is starting to run out. There was so much more that I wanted to talk about — the honour I've had of serving the citizens of Burnaby, the \$2.9 million in traffic-fine revenues I was able to deliver along with my colleagues just a couple of weeks ago.

I wanted to talk about what a great job all our teachers are doing in British Columbia. There's one teacher in particular, the new senator, Yonah Martin, who was just appointed a little while ago. She was just somebody that was loved by everybody.

I wanted to talk about the books I've given to kindergarten children every year for the last six years for literacy. I wanted to talk about the great care my dad had in his last little while. He lived on his own until he was nearly 95, and for a while he was at Parkwood Manor and then at Madison — what a great time.

I want to thank you for the real opportunity to stand up here and for allowing me to express my opinions and to be able to represent the citizens of Burnaby-Lougheed and to be able to represent the citizens of all of British Columbia and to work with everybody in the House to make British Columbia the best place on earth.

D. Routley: It's indeed an honour every time we rise in this House to speak on any issue, particularly the throne speech, because we have the latitude to really talk about what we believe in. But this is a special moment for everyone in the House, particularly members who aren't coming back because they are retiring, but all of us, because none of us should assume that we're coming back. We go back to the electorate and ask for their support again, and stand on our record. So we need to thank those people.

But we need to thank, most of all, our families, and I would like to thank a couple of people who aren't with us anymore for their public service. It was an example to me. My grandmother Florence Routley was a very devoted volunteer in the Coquitlam area, and she was an organizer of the annual May Day parade and did many other things in the community for which she was bestowed the honour of having Routley Avenue named after her. That's just off of Pitt River Road, for people in the province.

My dad, George Routley, who passed from ALS before I became involved in politics, was a devoted public ser-

vant in the school system. For his devotion to our public education system, a playing field in our school district, the Cowichan Valley district, was named after my dad. That's Routley field.

I want to thank my mom, Edna Woods, and my stepdad Bill for their great support over these years, and my sisters Beth Hayes and Alane Lublow for their love and support and constant willingness to listen to me. I want to thank my stepsisters Shannon and Gayle Woods. I want to thank my friend Leanne Finlayson for her love and acceptance, and her son Matthew and her daughter Brooklynne for their love and acceptance and their support through difficult times.

Most of all, I want to thank my daughter Madeline, which is difficult. Madeline is a wonderful person. I had the great honour, when she was growing up in her early years, of being a stay-at-home dad, working afternoon shifts.

[1535]

So Maddy and I — thank you, Maddy — did everything together. Every day we hiked and climbed and went to beaches. Really, those were the best years of my life. I knew at certain times — walking behind her with the light shining through the trees and the green on her back, with her blonde hair waving across her back — that I would remember those days with fondness and miss them. And I do miss them.

Those were the best days of my life, and they taught me a great deal about what's important and why we're here. So I especially want to thank Madeline. Thank you, Maddy.

The business of what we do is words. As I said earlier in a statement, we use words to represent ideas. We use words to defend people. We use words to seek just resolution to problems that our constituents, British Columbians, face. We use words to bring promise and hope to people. We use words to communicate their struggles, their beliefs.

Those words, for those reasons, become sacred. Not to us only, but more to them, because they entrust us to take to this place their interests — what they care about, what they need to have heard, the words they need for us to say.

So by that trust, words become precious. The only way words have meaning, the only way they're defined, is through action. If we believe what we say, and we do what we say, then we honour the words. If we betray what we say and betray what is hoped through those words, then we bring not only dishonour to the words, but cynicism to the people who believed in them. It's easy for us to stand here and use words in the most eloquent way we can to represent people's interests. What's more difficult is following through on the promise that is contained in those words.

It's particularly important when we examine the throne speech. When it happens, there's this pomp and ceremony, and it seems rather antiquated when a person

first views it. But when you realize that it's a precious moment when the responsibility of governing our province is handed from the Crown to the people elected by the citizens of British Columbia — their government and the loyal opposition — those words, just like the words I just talked about, take on a precious and sacred meaning. They're not just empty words.

The ceremony isn't just pomp and ceremony. It's important. It goes to the core of what this place means. It goes to the core of why we should expect to be trusted by British Columbians.

So it's disappointing, often, to read the words of throne speeches and to see how they raise up hope of principles — like seniors, the interests of seniors, when we have a throne speech that's directed towards seniors and seniors care and that entrusted.... That honour that is given to us, that legacy, that we inherit from our seniors, is held in our hand, and we extend to them a promise. When that's not met, when that promise is not met, we have betrayed something most sacred, and I've seen that happen in my constituency.

I've seen the interests of seniors trampled by the interests of policies gone wrong, promises made and promises broken — the seniors of Cowichan Lodge and the community of Cowichan Valley, who were promised in words by their government that that facility would not be closed. Well, I saw many old eyes that were very sad at the breaking of that promise.

[1540]

It's not just a case of "well, we couldn't quite do what we promised we'd do." Often the promises that are made in this House result in life-and-death decisions. Learned people have examined what happens to our seniors when they're dislocated in a way that doesn't consider their frailty and their vulnerability. They die. A certain percentage will not survive that transition. So the words that promise not to do that bring so much disgrace to the words of this parliament and the words of the people entrusted by our communities.

This throne speech did nothing to right that broken promise, did nothing to restore any faith my constituents might have that the words that they send me here to say and that they hear back from their government would be honoured. It builds a cynicism, the cynicism we hear throughout our communities when people say that they don't trust politics, that they don't want to be involved, that they don't want to pay attention. Well, it's because words are thrown out in this place. Promises are made in seeking power that are never meant to be fulfilled.

But the people who entrust us expect those promises to be met. They understand that often mistakes might be made or there are limitations that weren't foreseen, but they expect us to try to honour our word. That is the worst disgrace that I've witnessed as an MLA — the fact that people entrusted by those very vulnerable, honourable people that we represent would betray a promise.

In health care we see an effort to privatize. We've heard the previous speaker talk about how 90 percent of all new dollars are going into health care. Well, I don't think the measurement of health care efficiencies or performances is simply in how much we spend. If it were, the American system would far outperform us. In the United States, in a privatized system, they spend 16 percent of their gross domestic product on health care. Yet over 40 million people have no health care, and the number one cause of bankruptcies in the United States is the cost of health care.

I think the better measure is one that would assess whether needs are being met. You have surgery cancellations that lead to not only the discomfort and health results for patients but to the loss of our professionals, the loss of doctors, as has happened in Cowichan Valley. Doctors become so frustrated with the cancellation rates that they leave.

There's one anaesthetist who travels to Edmonton to a community hospital three weeks out of the month because he has a more consistent life doing that than he did working at the Cowichan Hospital just down the street from his home, because of the number of cancellations and the disruption that caused in his life and the life of the people he served, our people.

We see mental health funding inequities in our area, in rural parts of Vancouver Island, that aren't even touched by the throne speech. Kevin Edwards, a young man who attempted suicide with a gun and was charged with a gun crime, ended up avoiding jail time by promising to seek treatment for his issues, some of which were substance issues, but he couldn't afford a bus pass from Chemainus to his programming in Duncan.

It took him going public with his most personal tragedy and me doing interviews in the media about his personal story. It is not very nice for anyone to have to have that happen to them. It took that embarrassment card pulled out of a pocket to make the government act — not by doing what was clearly the ethical thing to do but just to avoid a headline. This throne speech does nothing to address the issues that Kevin Edwards faced.

Beds per thousand. In the Cowichan Valley there's one bed per thousand. In Victoria there are two beds per thousand. These are inequalities that this throne speech doesn't address. Rural British Columbia's interests are left out. This throne speech doesn't mention rural B.C. and those problems.

[1545]

There are other problems in health care in our constituency — the emergency room staffing, the closure of those seniors beds. There are 83 empty beds in the Cowichan Lodge, while seniors suffer the dishonour of being called bed-blockers because they're being transitioned through our hospital and taking up hospital beds, causing surgery cancellations. Those beds were closed because of that broken promise.

Families struggle. The whole community struggles to save that lodge. The government will only hear if it listens. It can't hear if it doesn't.

Private operators who did provide support to seniors in our valley are starving. They're meeting in the coming weeks to discuss whether or not they'll end up having to declare bankruptcies, many of them, because they have empty beds because of commitments made by the government to the new private operator, their private operator, that now starve these others who have served our community for so long.

So it's more of the same. It's more of the same theme. Words should mean something. Words, once promised, should be followed by deed.

Our first nations. The Cowichan First Nation is the largest first nation in the province — not by land, because most of their land was privatized in the E&N land grab, but by population, almost 4,000 members.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

They struggle with high unemployment rates, and they struggle with poor housing. They struggle with federal social programs overloaded, because so many have been driven back to the reserve by urban cuts to social programs that were made in previous decisions by this government. None of that was addressed in this throne speech.

They struggle, but they offer great hope, because they are the mirror opposite of our demography. Over 70 percent of the Cowichan First Nation are 26 or under. There's a great potential if they're supported, if they have the kind of support that the words that were offered by the government allowed them to hope for. But they also have the promise of great disappointment and cynicism if those words aren't acted upon, and they're not being.

They were promised more and more treaty negotiations, yet the budget for treaty negotiations was cut. That wasn't promised in this throne speech, but it was delivered by the subsequent budget. They struggle to deal with development proposals and environmental assessment requirements that they can't meet, as they're overwhelmed with deadlines they can't meet. If those deadlines aren't met, their acceptance is assumed.

What a terrible position to be put in, especially when those promised words were words like "reconciliation." That's a big word and a big concept, one that offers promise and one that offers hope. But the breaking of a big word like that offers a great deal of cynicism to the people who received that promise — vulnerable people, people who have waited for a decent partner on the shores of our communities for generations, only to have their hopes dashed against the rocks of despair by broken promises. And that was not dealt with in this throne speech.

We have a Premier who engaged in a lawsuit against the Nisga'a agreement. His assistant, Martyn Brown,

was the executive director of an anti-treaty group called Citizens' Voice on Native Claims. We saw the referendum on first nations rights and then suddenly, when deals were required, when commerce demanded it, a flip and a flop to this new promise — empty words, words that evaporate like breath on a cold winter day, unless you put meaning in those words. If this government fails to do that, they will continue to build cynicism in a people already bereft of hope but willing to invest in promises that were made solemnly.

[1550]

The child care. We see facilities closing, people who work practically on a voluntary basis with the most crucial element in our society, our young people. Early childhood educators who earn next to minimum wage, and their facilities barely able to cope with underfunding, with a process that's impossible to navigate, with bills being starved because of process that doesn't meet their needs.

This throne speech didn't deal with any of those issues. There's an economic benefit to child care. There's an obvious social benefit. In Quebec they have the largest participation of women in the skilled trades, and it has been directly attributed to the fact that they kept investing in child care. They have the best child care system in the country. That has freed up women to invest their time and energy in training themselves.

That is a huge achievement, and promises that have been made by the government surrounding child care spaces and funding of child care that aren't met are another dishonouring of solemn words, more of the same.

Our environment. This government that came to power in 2001 as one of its first acts abolished the Environment Ministry — cut the whole ministry — then proceeded to deregulate our province and take away regulations that, if they had been maintained, would have kept us on track. Right now we would be ahead of California in emission standards, in protection of watersheds, but instead, all of that was torn to pieces.

Then another flip and a flop when political expediency demanded it. What have we been offered as that green veneer? A punitive carbon tax that has fed nothing into a real change, offering the choices that British Columbians need to really live in a sustainable way.

Transit choices. This has all been augmented by things like school closures, courthouse closures and service withdrawals so that people who live in rural B.C., if they want the service that they deserve in an equitable society, need to travel great distances to get to that. How green is that?

How green is a government that seeks to lift the offshore moratorium on oil and gas exploration? This throne speech makes no promise not to do that. We know that the Premier has promised to lobby for that measure to be taken.

We live in fear on the coast of B.C. of oil on our shores. We hold precious our marine environment. It

is part of the soul and the culture of British Columbia — the wild salmon, the coast and its diverse and rich resource. A resistance to bring endangered species legislation. There's nothing in the throne speech that talks about protecting the endangered species of B.C. — the Vancouver Island marmot, only a few dozen left.

We've seen a Transportation Minister who, when questioned about the rising ferry fares.... I asked the Transportation Minister what he thought of an elder who shared a story with me. She told me about after.... She lives on Kuper Island. The residents of Kuper Island were displaced to Kuper Island from the foreshore of Chemainus in order to make way for mills and industry many generations ago. They depend on that ferry. They live an impoverished life.

This elder had to collect pop bottles to get back home. She didn't have enough money, so she offered what she had in change to the ferry worker. It wasn't enough, so they said no. She refused to leave the ferry, so the RCMP came to escort her off. Thankfully, someone in the ferry lineup gave her enough money for her fare, so she made it home, but she made it home without her dignity. It was a direct result of their ferry fares increasing by over 80 percent under the watch of this government.

So promises to reconcile with first nations that are met with answers like that bring another level of cynicism and another dashing of those hopes against the shores of our island.

[1555]

We see in forestry the workers of Harmac struggling to take over the mill. They put their lives on the line, they put their futures on the line, and they bought the mill. Now they can't get financing because they face a huge, unfunded liability for cleanup for past environmental wrongs.

This government has refused to act. Nothing in the throne speech for them. It has refused to act to remove those liabilities, even though they did in Port Alice for their friends who bought that mill, and even though in Mackenzie, when the pulp mill there closed down and the owners went bankrupt so there could be no reclaiming of the costs.... They are stuck — our province, our taxpayers, our citizens — paying the bill to keep that operation from polluting the environment and endangering their health.

So in the end, if the workers at Harmac aren't supported and the whole exercise fails — an exercise that the Forests Minister has called the model for the future of forestry — we'll end up taking it over, but we'll have lost those jobs. There's nothing in the throne speech for them.

There's nothing in the throne speech to deal with the monopoly on fibre on the coast that allows companies to export our raw logs without protecting our manufacturing base — exporting our jobs, exporting the future of our children, exporting the opportunity for British Columbians with entrepreneurial ideas to answer a very key question. Why Ikea? Why not "B.C.ea"?

Why aren't we producing end products with our raw materials? Why are we allowing this exporting of our future? Because of a privatization interest, because global corporations have a larger pull with the government than do the communities they represent. That led to a disintegration of our industry, so that the integration between the many levels — the logging, the sawmilling, the pulp milling — was broken, along with the social contract that those industries supported.

That was deregulation, and look how well that worked for the U.S. banking system. Well, it's mirrored in our forests and the collapse of an industry. It's mirrored when the workers who work in that industry faced calamity in terms of safety. So 47 workers died in one year. The coroner in Duncan, looking into the death of logger Ted Gramlich, pointed directly at that deregulation as the severing of the safety chain of responsibility. So no one took responsibility, and he and many like him paid the price for that. His family live without him.

TFL, tree farm licence, removal on Vancouver Island. The Auditor General called it a failure to protect the public interest. How did the government respond? The Forests Minister picked a fight with the Auditor General. The Auditor General is dismissed, just as he was around the Olympic spending.

We had the minister stand in this House repeatedly and promise \$600 million, not a penny more, even though previous Auditor General van Iersel pointed to the fact that it would probably cost \$2.5 billion. That was before we knew that the security costs were — what? — eight times greater than was promised by this government.

More words that aren't matched with deed. More meaning lost. More cynicism built in the minds and souls of British Columbians when they consider who represents them, why they should care. Why should they care if what they say doesn't matter and what is said to them doesn't matter one whit?

Our agriculture industry had meat regulations brought to it that devastated the small producers — devastated them, drove them out of business. Why? Because we had to satisfy larger traders. We had to satisfy bigger players. We had to satisfy friends of our government. Food security was sacrificed. Again, the government that paints itself green causes greater transportation of our food and causes environmentally responsible small producers to vacate the field.

[1600]

Housing. No commitment to social housing, no commitment to make housing affordable for British Columbians. Housing is a human right. Throughout the '90s the federal government didn't contribute money to housing in this province, but the government of the day kept building social housing. They supported social housing cooperatives that flourished in this province and offered options to families.

Interjection.

D. Routley: That was the NDP.

Now that the federal government is contributing money to housing, what does this government do with that money? It diverts it towards assisted living in order to paper over another broken promise — more words that didn't mean anything. All this contributes to the fact that, for the sixth year running, we lead this country in child poverty.

Children who live with their families in poverty, gaps that are growing, previously unseen examples of poverty and homelessness and tragedy on our streets — all this in just a few short years of policy gone wrong. For 17 years straight, poverty rates declined in this province, until 2001.

A \$10 minimum wage? "No, we won't have that. We'll take the \$8 minimum wage, and we'll reduce it to \$6 for trainees. In the province with the highest cost of living, we'll reduce the minimum wage."

You know, in the Maritimes the Nova Scotians raised the minimum wage. Legislators there said: "Well, we did it partly because we're sick of being last." Who's last now? B.C. Again, broken promises contributing to the gaps that grow in our communities. More of the same.

Apprenticeships and training in chaos by an idealistically driven set of policies that drove out stakeholders and created chaos, as pointed to by the Auditor General. But again, the Auditor General doesn't have much sway with this government, because he, like others, is critical of the results of their policies. Nothing in the throne speech addressed that chaos or helped those students at a time when this province needs to invest in its future.

Well, British Columbians deserve the truth, not a litany of broken promises. B.C. Rail...

Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

D. Routley: Let's not sell our common wealth.

Hon. G. Hogg: Thank you for this opportunity to speak to the throne speech that was provided at this session of the 38th parliament. Many of my colleagues have spoken about people who've inspired them, who've been involved in and a part of what has helped them to come to this place.

As I was hearing the speaker from the opposition talking, I was reminded of the influences that my family have had on me and, in particular, with reference to my father, who has now passed away. He was a doctor in White Rock. Since his passing away, they have named a park after him and a new building for extended care. Certainly he, I think, symbolized many of the themes which are prevalent in the throne speech.

My mother is currently in extended care. My mother was the person who told me in grade 11 that it was time to go out and start coaching Little League and get involved in the community and do things. Some years later when I was going to university, I was coaching a Little League team that had the right to go to Edmonton to represent White Rock in the western Canadian championships. So I went to my very first city council meeting, my first political meeting, and sat through the lengthy agenda.

As fate would have it, my agenda item with respect to this Little League team was last on the agenda, and I was able to get a small amount of money for this group of kids. I went back home and was sitting at the kitchen table having a glass of milk and a peanut butter sandwich, and my mother walked into the kitchen and said: "How did it go, son?" I said: "Mom, it was old people making stupid decisions."

She now reminds me, in fact, that I am one of those old people making similar decisions. But she stopped in the kitchen and looked at me as I think only a mother could do, and she said: "Son, you know, I'd always hoped that I'd raise you to be the kind of person that if you don't like something, you wouldn't complain but you'd get involved and try and make a difference."

[1605]

I had many sleepless nights after that, hearing my mother's voice echoing in my head, and I thought: "I'll show you, Mom, I'll run for city council."

I did that while still going to university and was elected. I think many people thought it was my father that was running, and they were surprised when I turned up at the council meetings. Somehow they allowed me for 20 years to be on that council — ten of them as mayor — and subsequently have given me the privilege of coming to this place. I want to thank the people of Surrey–White Rock for the opportunities that they have given to me and for the foibles that I've made.

I remember one person saying to me... I think it was the second or third time that I was running for mayor. They said: "You know, I'm not sure I can vote for you. I don't agree with all of your decisions." I said: "You know, I've been here for 14 or 15 years now. As I look back, I don't agree with all of my decisions either." There are lots of things we have to look at and manage as we move forward.

The throne speech started out, as tradition has it, by remembering a number of people who have made significant contributions to British Columbia who had recently passed away, people who've made significant differences, people who've helped build our province. There are seven themes that the throne speech addresses, a theme of confidence, hope, partnership, leadership, looking at future generations, opportunities and challenges.

Two names who are mentioned in the throne speech are people who I knew and had significant impact on my life, two people who have continued to look at and to build a province as strong and as diverse as its people.

One of those is Grand Chief Bernard Charles. Grand Chief Bernard Charles was a lawyer. He was one of the first presidents of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs. He was the first, first nations person to be elected president of a students' council in a non-aboriginal school. He was president of Semiahmoo high school.

He was a unique, wonderful, kind man who passed away this past summer. I had the privilege of being with him through that last while and the privilege of providing the eulogy at his memorial, a large memorial — over a thousand people with many aboriginal leaders from across the province and presided over by the Lieutenant-Governor.

I had been wondering and obsessing about what I might say about Bernard's life, and as I arrived, the Lieutenant-Governor pulled me aside and said: "Your responsibility here is to ensure that everyone goes out of here feeling positive, that everyone leaves with a good feeling. That's the only way that Bernard's journey will be positive, will be successful, that he'll be able to go to the other side the way that he needs to."

I hadn't come exactly prepared to do that, but searched for and found ways to have lots of positive memories with him. The first time I ran for city council, Bernard's wife Sharon, who is far more organized and driven than either Bernard or I, had decided how we were going to knock on doors and what we were going to do. So she told us where we were supposed to go, what we were supposed to do. Bernard and I used to go to Five Corners in White Rock and drink tea or coffee until we thought it was safe to go back and face Sharon again. We said: "Everything is going well, Sharon. Everything's great." Of course we were misleading her, as we tended to do for some period of time.

I think Bernard's life epitomizes the seven themes that are evident in the throne speech — the first one, that of confidence. Bernard was a man of great calmness, but also, of great confidence. He had enormous hope. He had suffered strokes, and he was able to go through those strokes and still maintain a positive vision of what the Semiahmoo people should be, of what our province should be and how to get there.

He had tremendous hope, despite the fact that one of his sons had committed suicide in the mid-1990s. I had the privilege of giving the eulogy at that point in time, as well, and recognizing how spiritual he was and how his family was able to look at and have vision and continue to maintain hope. He had a great sense of collegiality that was able to bring together partnerships, whether it was in his stroke club or the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs.

[1610]

I remember when I was at university and Red Power was a big movement. There were people from all over North America at UBC talking about Red Power and about: "Everyone stay away from us because we want to collect ourselves before we move out and do anything." Bernard was one of the last speakers and was able to

stand up and bring a great sense of calm and a great sense of tying the issues of first nations together with those of human rights all over the world.

He took some of the edge off it, but also gave a great sense of value, connectedness and tradition to what the discussions were and gave all of us who are present a great sense of hope.

He was clearly a great leader. He was a leader of the Semiahmoo people, a leader of the province, and he was a leader of the non-aboriginal communities in our province as well. I remember when I was mayor I'd invited him to participate with the city of White Rock when we received our coat of arms from the Governor General, Ray Hnatyshyn. Bernard got up and spoke about rights and title, in the mid-1990s, in a very eloquent, in a very well-informed way that I know left all of us in awe. It certainly left the Governor General with a sense of the importance of the issue and a rational approach to it.

He had great respect for future generations — another theme that is evident in the throne speech. He was a father, a grandfather, and he was a foster parent. Even in the last years of his life he continued to reach out and be a foster parent, particularly to a number of young aboriginal children all over the province and aboriginal children with special needs. That was part of his compassion, part of the softness that he brought.

He saw opportunities. He always encouraged others. Certainly, I've made reference to some of the challenges that he faced and how he managed them. He was clearly a man of great intellect, great compassion and great caring, who was very soft in his approach.

The second person who was referred to in the throne speech and who has had an influence on our community was Chuck Bailey. Chuck Bailey was well known for his participation in Little League and particularly in the Whalley Little League system, which he developed and pioneered.

I think he, too, represents many of the themes that are evident in the throne speech. In particular, over the past number of years he's been a part of the White Rock–South Surrey Little League association, which is the largest Little League association in Canada now and which has won the Canadian championship for the last two years and represented Canada at Williamsport.

Chuck Bailey was the first one in Whalley to develop these great Little League teams that, along with Trail, were great symbols of excellence in Little League. But I think, more importantly, Chuck started something called the challenge program in Little League. He developed this program for special needs children, who didn't have an opportunity previously to participate in ball. Many of them had not participated in a team.

He connected the excellence of the Little League all-stars from Whalley, the 12-year-old all-stars, with a number of kids who had special needs and tied those together and had them working together. What he found

— I remember him telling me with a gleam in his eye — was that when the funding for that seemed to be dropping off, the 12-year-old all-stars came to him and said: "It's more important to us that we participate in the challenge program than it is that we go to the Little League World Series.

It had had such a profound impact on them as people, as caring children, as caring young people — more significance for them than the whole participation with respect to excellence in the performance. I think that is a great statement on the humanity and the best qualities of people who live in our province and who make our province as strong, diverse and unique as the people who live here.

We do live at a very unique time in our history with the economic challenges that we have. But I think it's sometimes easy for us to forget that we are amongst the very first generations that have actually had a number of choices that we can make with respect to who we are and what we do.

Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert, in his book *Stumbling on Happiness*, said that there are three really important choices that we make in our lives. One is where we live, the second is what we do and the third is who we live with. Certainly, prior to the last few generations, people lived where their parents had lived. They basically did what their parents had done, and they lived with who their parents decided they should live with.

[1615]

We are at a unique and special time as a world in terms of those choices, for most developed countries, becoming things that we get to decide on — more choices than we've ever had before. With those choices come more responsibility and the challenges that come with that.

Many are choosing to live in British Columbia. They're choosing to live here, I think, not just because of our natural beauty and amenities but also because of the strength of our pluralistic, multicultural society. I was interested to read a statistic recently that said that between 30 percent and 50 percent of startup companies are from immigrants, new Canadians, who come here because they've seen the challenges and opportunities that exist here.

Certainly, the throne speech references our new world — a world that requires a new mindset, a world that finds hope and, in reality, that implores us to look at things and change. No place offers more opportunity, more cause for hope and for confidence in the future in these economic times — or perhaps in any time — than British Columbia does. We are indeed very, very fortunate.

The throne speech makes reference to a number of the visions and how those visions start to become articulated. We talk about \$3 billion to be invested across B.C. to replace, renovate and expand K-to-12 schools so that we can ensure that we are able to have safe and positive

places for the education process to take place, so that we can be having more people contribute to our multicultural society.

And \$1.7 billion will be invested across B.C. over three years in post-secondary facilities, including projects to increase student capacity, \$14 billion in infrastructure spending in looking at the issues of transportation and transit, \$2.5 billion over the next three years in capital spending for health care and health initiatives.

Those include, in particular reference to my community, an upgrade to Surrey Memorial Hospital's out-patient facility as well as the critical care tower — two programs which will have profound influence across Delta, Surrey, White Rock and Langley as we look at trying to balance and meet the needs of one of the fastest-growing areas of our province.

Health operating expenditures will increase by \$4.8 billion over the next three years. By 2012 it will be \$17.5 billion expended annually in health care, and 90 percent of the increases that we're looking at in expenditures in our budgets will be going to health care. That's a 65 percent increase since 2001.

In the South Surrey–White Rock area I am particularly pleased with the focus of the throne speech and the consequent budget and what that means for our community. We've had the great privilege of working closely with White Rock's city council, with Surrey council and with our Member of Parliament, Russ Hiebert, in terms of looking at the initiatives and developing a collegial approach to how we can best address some of the needs.

Certainly, some of the issues around looking at methods by which we can increase safety, and the issues of public safety, are evident in this. Over \$6.3 million is going to be added to Surrey for public safety issues and over \$600,000 to White Rock with respect to public safety and other initiatives which certainly contribute to public safety.

If we make reference to some of the literature and research that talks about public safety, it talks about community engagement. Certainly, Putnam's work in terms of the issues of social capital and the engagement and ability of change shows that those communities that have higher social capital have lower crime rates, have higher initial birth weights and are healthier communities in a broad sense of that word. We must ensure that we're continuing to look at and address the issues of public safety on a broad spectrum.

Within that framework there's been \$161,131 for funding for the arts and cultural organizations and artists in Surrey–White Rock, and \$10,000 of that is going to the operating costs of the Community Arts Council of White Rock.

[1620]

I should note that the leader of that community arts council for so many years is Robin Rankin, who has done wonderful service to our community. She has recently

retired from that position. We extend our appreciation for all she has done to create a great, vibrant arts community, famous for having a fundraiser each year called Artsolutely Fabulous, which CBC commentator Rick Clough and I have had the privilege of emceeding for the past number of years.

It is always a great deal of fun in which they have artists contribute a number of paintings. We draw names, and they get to choose the painting. The first name gets to have the first choice of painting, and there is one painting for each ticket sold.

Everything was going well until last year, when I dropped all of the numbers. One of them disappeared and caused great consternation. The person who had that one figured they for sure were going to be the first one drawn. By losing that one it made it much more difficult for them to become first. In any event, because there's optimism and positive and a sense of hope we were able to move on with respect to that.

The Trees for Tomorrow program has been an important part of our community, with over \$28,000 going to Peace Arch Elementary School to look at improving the boulevard around that elementary school — my alma mater as an elementary school, in fact. I'm delighted to see the opportunities that are going there. Again, the vision's tied out of our throne speech.

There is \$474,279 for the province's strategic community investment fund for restructuring provincial grant programs to give communities funding sooner and opportunities to do such things as support basic services — \$176,000 for that; \$297,000 going back to enhance policing and community policing opportunities; over \$4,000 for the climate action incentive program; over \$20,000 to two elementary schools to help their PACs deal with managing and improving their playgrounds.

I had the privilege of participating recently in the opening of the new MRI for Peace Arch Hospital. The Fraser Health Authority has provided the placement for it, the operating costs, and our community has raised the money for that MRI.

The city of White Rock became a city in 1957. It became a city probably because of the generation and work of what was then called the women's auxiliary. The women's auxiliary decided in the late 1940s that we needed a hospital in White Rock. The closest hospital was Royal Columbian Hospital.

My father used to drive to Royal Columbian from White Rock each day and back home. I believe there was a toll on the Pattullo Bridge in those days. In fact, he tells me one day — I don't know when; it must have been in the '50s sometime — that he had bought a package of stickers that he had on his dash. They got him back and forth. He had one per day for over a month, and apparently I ate all of the stickers that he had, and he....

An Hon. Member: What a surprise.

Hon. G. Hogg: I was a little....

An Hon. Member: With peanut butter?

Hon. G. Hogg: With peanut butter, actually. In fact, I think that he's made....

One other comment I should make now that my colleague the Minister of Advanced Education is picking on me. Because there wasn't a hospital — and this is maybe one of the reasons we needed to have one — patients used to come and bring, in this instance, a urine sample to our place that was placed in the fridge for my father to take to the hospital to have it analyzed.

I got up, as a very young child. I thought it was apple juice and consumed it. My father has assured me that he thinks I'm still full of it. That was a thing that happened at that time. Because I ate the stickers, he was sure that every piece of food that I ate was also sticking to me.

Thank you for the Minister of Advanced Education for allowing me that slight diversion.

Before I was so rudely distracted, where I was going with that was the issue of the hospital auxiliary and our community growing up around the initiative of a number of women saying that we need a hospital, coming back and forth to Victoria negotiating that. My father was one of the people who came to Victoria and said we need a hospital.

With the provision of a hospital, all of a sudden White Rock, instead of being ward 13 of Surrey, became a city and has grown out of that and grown around the hospital.

The hospital foundation and the energy and focus of the women's auxiliary and now the hospital and community foundation.... It's one of the most successful foundations in the province and is one that has resulted in many, many contributions made to our community, the most recent one being the MRI.

[1625]

We are also developing a centre for health improvement. A centre for health improvement is a unique placement, a unique facility that combines both recreation and rehab for people, primarily cardiac patients, who are able to move out of the hospital and be in a program that will allow them to learn what they have to do to rehabilitate themselves most effectively.

It is going to be funded — the operating costs — by the health authority, and the funding for that has come from a unique combination of the city of White Rock, the province of British Columbia, the federal government, the Peace Arch Hospital and Community Health Foundation, the White Rock–South Surrey Community Foundation and the Peace Arch Curling Club, which have come together to create a unique facility. I am told it will be one of the first of its kind in the world that will be able to promote health promotion in that integrated fashion.

We've also seen an integrated health network opportunity exist, where we have a nurse placed by the province in the medical practice facility of family physicians.

I'm told by one of the family physicians that he's able to take on over 30 more patients as a result of this and feels they provide better care. So somebody who may be a diabetic will be placed on a plan where the nurse will maintain contact with this patient and allow that to grow and to continue.

If this model works across the province, and I know it's being tried in a number of areas, we will see that the capacity for health care and our ability to take on health care challenges will be much more effective and reasoned in terms of the way we manage and deal with those. I think those are very positive initiatives that grow out of some of the opportunities that we have in our province, some of the things that are foreshadowed in the throne speech and supported through the budget.

I would be remiss if I did not make a couple of comments with respect to my responsibilities with the mining industry and the issues with that. I'd like to, in particular, thank the Mining Association of B.C., the Association for Mineral Exploration B.C., people who are a part of Geoscience B.C. and those who participated in the economic task force to look at how we can ensure that we manage most effectively the issues prevalent in terms of this downturn and the challenges that we have.

We should appreciate and recognize that we have over 850 head offices for mining in the greater Vancouver area. We have the best quantum of information in terms of skills and abilities in the world centred in the Vancouver area. Over 50 percent of the port traffic is as a result of issues growing out of mining, and we have to continue to grow and support that.

Towards that end, I've created a Minister's Council on Mineral Exploration and Mining, and the people who have sat on that have provided great advice and support to government. We have looked at and been trying to move forward with Highway 37, and the province has committed \$250 million to that project, which we're told could bring \$15 billion worth of investment to our province and which could provide over 11,000 jobs.

Certainly, we have tried to speed that process up by committing \$10 million of that to the environmental assessment process that is now undergoing work with its terms of reference and the challenges with that. We're looking at how we can improve the environmental assessment process to ensure that we can move things more effectively through some of the best environmental practices in the world.

Our mining task force has looked at some specific challenges we have and ways to respond to the current downturn in the economy. One of the things that they've said is: "Keep doing what you've been doing. There are ten wonderful things you've done since 2001 that we want you to focus on and continue." They gave us five things when we formed government that they wanted us to respond to, and we've responded to those.

So while there are significant challenges as we move forward in terms of the availability of the marketplace to provide the funding, there are certainly a number of positive things we've been able to look at, including the enhanced mining exploration tax credit, moving that to 30 percent from 20 percent for those areas that have been infested by the pine beetle. We've extended the new mining allowance through 2016 to allow significant capital deductions for new and expanding mines.

Most importantly, we've invested over \$30 billion in Geoscience B.C. since 2001. That's the largest investment ever. I'm told that B.C., along with parts of Australia, is leading the world in the issue of geoscience.

[1630]

They're flying over areas that have glacial till or different types of dirt over them. The explorers, who are out there with their picks and hammers, can't get at it. By being able to do penetrating radio waves into the ground, they're able to make determinations on a broad base as to what might exist under there. That has resulted in incredible increases in exploration. From the moment that those issues that come out of that have been released, we've seen great interest in and increases in the amount of investment that occur within the area.

The seven themes that have been talked about — I mentioned earlier confidence, hope, partnership, leadership, future generations, opportunities and challenges — are evident in all of our lives and in our society. It is resilience and a positive approach that allow us to take those and be able to move forward.

I'm always interested in the ways that we look at things and how we manage things. Gregg Easterbrook, in his book *Progress Paradox*, said that we're better off today than we've ever been, by all the objective measurement criteria you may look at. But people are feeling worse off.

I'm intrigued that the Conference Board of Canada objective measurement says we have the best health care system in Canada, yet B.C. people think that we're maybe seven or eight. Some of the maritime provinces are ranked tenth, but they think that they're one or two. So how do we ensure that public opinion and informed opinion come closer together?

I remember hearing a first nations speaker once said to me that all of us have two wolves inside of us, a good wolf and a bad wolf, and they're always working with each other. Somebody said to him: "Well, which one wins?" The first nations leader said: "The one we feed."

I think that we have to be feeding the good wolf in us. We have to be looking optimistically and positively at the great opportunities we have in this province — the opportunities to move forward with vision, with a plan and with political will to take advantage of the opportunities that exist. Through that process, I'm sure we

will have a province that will continue to be as strong and diversified and positive as the people who live here, because that's what the symbol of British Columbia is.

[S. Hammell in the chair.]

That's what each of us as individuals wants to have. That's what we want to have collectively — to be that multicultural, pluralistic, diversified society that provides opportunity for all who live here.

I stand today in support of the throne speech for the opportunities that it provides to the people of this province as we move forward.

D. Chudnovsky: Madam Speaker, it's great to have the opportunity to speak to the throne speech. I thank you in advance for the latitude that you will provide for me, given that this is likely the last time I'll speak in this House.

Let me begin by thanking the people of Vancouver-Kensington and saying what a privilege and pleasure it has been to represent them for the last four years. I've learned a lot. We get a chance to learn a lot as MLAs, and I think that's because one of the best things about our job is that people want to talk to you. I still find it breathtaking that they do, but they do want to talk to us.

In the last four years I've had many teachers. In the first two years I was here, I was the opposition critic for Transportation. I needn't tell you, and I am quick to tell everyone else, that I had a lot to learn when I started. I had wonderful teachers, especially Ray Rogers, Eric Doherty, David Field, Blair Redlin, Ray Stratsma and Jim Houlihan. I want to thank them all for their patience with me and for all they taught me.

Each of them in their own way reminded me that transportation policy can't be about privatization and greenhouse gases. It can't be about the browning of British Columbia. Instead, transportation needs to be about British Columbians visiting and studying and working and trading with one another in a way that is both sustainable and socially just. That's why cheap, accessible public transit is always the way to go.

For most of the last two years I was the critic for homelessness and mental health issues. There have been so many wonderful people who helped me with that job — Jean Swanson, a true British Columbia hero; Wendy Peterson; that extraordinary advocate, David Eby; and my dear, dear friend Linda Shuto. I want to thank all of them for their help.

[1635]

More important, I want to thank the hundreds of homeless people it was my privilege to meet and learn from over the last two years. There's more good sense and public policy expertise in any emergency shelter or on the street among those who we, to our shame, have ignored than there is on the entire government front bench.

It's important to say one more time. I've said it a thousand times, I think. I'll say it one more time here. The homelessness crisis isn't complicated.

The most important reason we have the worst homelessness crisis since the Great Depression is that we stopped building social housing — the federal government and this provincial government. There are other factors, but they pale into insignificance. If you stop building social housing, both supportive housing and family housing for those who can't afford the market, then you're going to have a homelessness crisis, and that's what we did.

I also want to thank the residents of Little Mountain social housing, those who are still there and those who have been pushed out over the last two years, only to see their homes stand empty month after month. This government owes those people an apology not just for botching the loony deal they concocted to redevelop Little Mountain but, more importantly, for destroying a community — a wonderful community that was vibrant and productive and now stands as a cruel reminder that greed and land speculation can never be the foundations for a rational social housing program.

It's important to pay tribute, as well, to my dear friends the residents of Fraser Villa and Prince Albert Court, just five blocks from my house, who are being evicted from their affordable market rental apartments because no government could or would come to their aid when a developer decided to toss them out. These incredible people have taught me more about bravery, courage, multiculturalism, solidarity and community development than they will ever know. They are heroes.

Madam Speaker, I've spent four years here, so it seems to me I have the right and, I think, the responsibility to say some things about this Legislature and how it works — or doesn't work. If the people of the province actually spent some of their time watching us here, they'd be appalled. Every one of us knows that. It's not just that we heckle and yell at one another. It's much more fundamental than that.

They sent us here to govern, and we don't. Everybody who works here knows that the real governing takes place in the Premier's office with a few handpicked friends and advisers. That's not just this government. I'm not talking about just this government.

We here in this chamber are a kind of sideshow — an important sideshow but a sideshow nonetheless. We're part of the show that results in the choice of the next Premier in whose office the small group of advisers will again make the important decisions.

Who's winning question period? What's the tone in the Legislature? Who's made the best quips this week? Add those questions to the results of the latest polling and the opinions of a few pundits, and presto, we have what passes for politics in British Columbia. Rather than substance, this chamber is filled with sound and sometimes fury, but it signifies not very much.

The people sent us here to listen to one another, but we don't. They sent us here to negotiate with one another, but we don't. They sent us here, every one of us, to advise government, to take the debate seriously and to be taken seriously, but we don't. That's mostly because the debate hardly matters.

[1640]

The people expect that when the opposition asks a simple, straightforward question, the government will give a straightforward answer. But that's not the way it works. Here again, I'm not talking about this government. I'm talking about the government of the day. Instead, we've created a system where the questions become the politics of question period, because there are never any answers. How pathetic.

But it's not enough to bemoan what is. What could we do to make it better? Here are a few modest suggestions. The Legislature should have a committee structure that matters. All-party committees should study and make recommendations on emergent and ongoing issues. Consensus decisions should be required, and recommendations should lead directly to draft legislation, and then you can vote how you want to vote.

Party discipline should be enforced only on matters of confidence and on proposed legislation that was committed to specifically as part of the platform of a party during the previous election.

Question period rules should require a specific answer to a specific question, and the Speaker should enforce these rules strictly. When the Minister of Education, for instance.... Here I don't mean to centre out the Minister of Education. It's just that education is my stuff. It's what I care about the most. When the Minister of Education answers a detailed question about cuts to education service to children — our children — with her irrelevant dirge that more money is being spent than ever, she does the province no favours.

She could say: "That's all the money we have" or "That's all the money we choose to spend, because there are other priorities" or "That's as much as we think is necessary." Any of those answers would generate a real debate about education, and that would be good for our province.

It will take a Premier and a government with real courage to make such a change, but until it happens, question period will continue to be a poor excuse for a reality TV show rather than an opportunity to improve our province.

Every MLA should be required to hold three or four town hall meetings in his or her constituency each year. These should be widely advertised and should be part of the budget allocation for constituency offices.

We should institute a form of mixed-member proportional representation so that every vote is meaningful and every significant point of view is represented.

I've spoken so far about process and procedure, but what about the substance of the politics? What should

we be talking about in this House? For me that question is answered simply. The wealthy and the powerful and the privileged can take care of themselves. It's the rest, the majority of poor and marginalized and working-class British Columbians, who should be uppermost in our minds every minute we're in this House.

We need to think about the tens of thousands of forest workers who have been thrown out of work and about their families, desperately clinging to their homes, their communities and their hope. We need to think about the farmworkers, almost all of them immigrants, who plant and tend and pick our crops but who drive to work in unsafe and inadequate vehicles, who breathe pesticides at work and who are paid a pittance for all of this. This Legislature must speak and act for them, because nobody else can and nobody else will.

We should be thinking about the 250,000 British Columbians who work and earn \$10 an hour or less; the 15,000 of our neighbours who have nowhere to live; the 20 percent of children in our province who are growing up in poverty; the thousands on income assistance, when rates are impossible to live on; and the tens of thousands more who've been thrown off welfare or who can't even qualify for welfare. This Legislature must speak and act for those people, because nobody else can and nobody else will.

[1645]

We should be thinking about the single mom desperately searching for affordable, quality child care when none is available. We need to think about the early childhood educators who earn ridiculously low wages to care for and nurture our most precious resource — our children.

We need to think about the thousands of students with special needs in our classrooms, their education services diminishing year by year; the seniors waiting for care; the health care workers whose jobs were stolen and whose salaries were stolen; and the post-secondary students leaving school with enormous debt. This Legislature must speak and act for them, because nobody else can and nobody else will.

We need to think about the couple in Revelstoke I met a few weeks ago who were living in their car and showering every day in the community centre and who were desperate for someplace to live, not just because they needed a home but because they needed their dignity.

My friend Haroun has a wife and four kids, works two jobs and makes 2,200 bucks a month. That's not a living wage. Sorry about that. This isn't where I thought I was going to get emotional. Sylvia, who with her daughter has a total income of just \$900 from child support, has been spending 67 percent of that on rent. Ingrid and her mother, who've been living at Little Mountain social housing for 54 years, are being pushed out of their home by this government. This Legislature must speak and act for them, because nobody else can, and nobody else will.

Remember, the wealthy and the powerful and the privileged can take care of themselves. Every minute of our time in this House should be spent thinking of and working for those who need us, because they need us badly.

There will be those who say: "But the way to take care of those in need is to encourage and help those at the top. Cut their taxes. Deregulate. Privatize." It's an interesting theory. It's especially embraced by those who would benefit, although even they are becoming skeptical these days.

The problem is that the theory doesn't work. It's just that philosophy that got us into the mess we face today. Deregulation, privatization and cutting taxes for the wealthy and the corporations — the idealization of greed — are the problem, not the solution. Those who prescribe as an antidote to our current troubles more privatization, more deregulation and more greed are not only wrong, but they're irresponsible.

John Maynard Keynes, whose economic theories are once more in vogue, had much to teach us about these issues. Remember, Keynes was no socialist. His economics were about saving capitalism in the last Great Depression. Keynes said: "Capitalism is the extraordinary belief that the nastiest of men, for the nastiest of reasons, will somehow work for the benefit of us all."

It's that ridiculous belief that underlies the privatization mantra we've been fed for the last 25 years and that we've been force-fed in this House for the last eight. Remember, it doesn't work. It wasn't working before the economic collapse of the last few months, and it certainly isn't working now.

Corporate rule, aided and abetted by governments whose sole purpose has been to facilitate corporate rule, is a failure. That's why public governance, community governance and democracy are so important. It's important that our economic, social and political strategy be community-based and government-based for two reasons: first, because it best offers us the hope of progress and social justice and equity, but second, because it's democratic.

[1650]

We have no input or control over those companies which have been invited in to privatize our province. Their decisions are made at board tables in Cleveland and Brussels and Calgary, and those decisions have little to do with our needs. They are accountable to the bottom line and to the shareholders.

But when we together, at the community or municipal or provincial level, make a decision, those governments are accountable to us in the most fundamental way. We can get rid of them. Public service and democracy are the principles that should guide us. Greed and the well-being of the already privileged just don't work.

In concluding, I want to thank just a few more people. First, I want to thank my neighbours, the terrific people of Vancouver-Kensington, who gave me this wonderful privilege.

To the Vancouver-Kensington NDP constituency executive: my thanks for their energy and commitment. Thanks to Jim Edmondson, our constituency president, for his friendship over 30 years and especially for his service over the last four.

To the NDP caucus staff for making me look as good as is humanly possible.

To my colleagues in the opposition caucus: it's been a pleasure to work with all of you.

Thanks to the staff here at the Legislature.

To the Leader of the Opposition: contrary to what the pundits were saying four years ago, we were and are close and dear friends. In a few weeks I think she's going to be the Premier. Thanks for everything, Carole.

To my constituency assistants, Zoe Mallard, Rachel Marcuse, Kelly Reid and Linda Shuto and to the amazing and wonderful Yiman Jiang: I can't thank you enough.

To the real MLA for Vancouver-Kensington, Kate Van Meer-Mass: you've been an inspiration. All of the good work we've done is a testament to your intelligence and creativity and energy. It's been a wonderful partnership.

I want to thank my parents, who taught me everything I needed to know about politics. The union makes you strong. Never cross a picket line. Racism needs to be fought. Social justice is always the goal. And the struggle for peace is the most important struggle of all.

As always, the most meaningful thanks to the most important people, my best friends — Ruth Herman, my partner in life and in working for a better world; Anna Chudnovsky and Chris Kinkaid; Benjamin Chudnovsky and Melissa Radford. Without all of them nothing is possible.

J. Nuraney: I must resist the temptation of responding to some of the remarks that the member for Vancouver-Kensington just uttered. In the modern times that we now live in, it is still a shame that people think that being successful is nasty, that being able to develop financial success is nasty. It's important to understand that it is through these successes that we are able to meet the needs of those who need it the most. That's how the system works.

The thinking of the people from the opposite side, I dare say, is archaic and is 50 years old. It's time that they gave their head a shake and started to, as we say, smell the coffee.

[1655]

These are modern times. These are new times. These are the times of free enterprise. These are the times of being able to give opportunities for our generations to be successful. These are the times of encouragement. These are the times of giving choices to people rather than putting them in boxes which, as we have seen, did not succeed in the eastern European countries where they tried for so many years.

Having just said that, let me come back to my remarks about the throne speech. I also want to begin my remarks by thanking some of the very important people in my life, people who helped me be where I am today. I am speaking about my family. I am speaking about my dear wife, who has been very supportive all these years, through thick and thin, and stays by my side and, to this day, still talks to me, encourages me and puts me on the path every time I waver.

I want to say thank you to her. She was by my side when we went through a traumatic experience. When I, with very young children, had to leave the Congo 35 years ago to find a new home and to make a new settlement, she stood by my side. She helped me, and we came through our challenges. Today I look back and say to myself: "What a blessed man I am, with all these blessings that I have had over the years."

Today I'm a very proud father of three children. My oldest son, Nick, has taken over my businesses and has proven himself to be a much better operator than I could ever have been. My other son, who is in the movie industry, has also developed a reputation of being a very good editor and has had continuous work for the past several years. My daughter, who I call my princess, has also, in her own right, become very successful. I am feeling very proud as I stand here today to say that what I am today, and what I have achieved so far, is a result of these people.

I also want to thank my father, who completed his 100th year last year and is still with us today. He has been a source of strength to all of us, and to this day, as he struggles with his own life, he has yet to ask anything of us. Continually, every time I see him, his last words to me are: "Is there anything that you need?"

These are some of the people who played a very important role in my life, and I want to say today: "Thank you, thank you."

I have also had other people who helped me through my political career and aspirations. The person who really planted the seed of public service in my mind is hon. Sen. Mobina Jaffer. She's the one who asked me to take part in public life. Through her encouragement, I was able to do so. So I want to say thank you to Senator Jaffer, as well, for being such an important part of my life.

[1700]

We talk about the throne speech that was delivered on February 16 of this year. Each year since 2001 I've had the opportunity to reflect on the statements and aspirations reflected in throne speeches. These are statements of our plan to build, block by block, the future of our province.

In the beginning of our term we had tough challenges. We had the challenge to rein in the outlandish and thoughtless spending of the previous government. Our first order of business was to bring sanity into how we governed the province and lay down objectives, not only to correct the ills of the past but to establish a clear dir-

ection to return our province to the land of opportunity that it is destined to be.

Today I'm very proud to say that after eight years of prudent management, our province has experienced the highest level of growth in economic opportunities and has offered our children and our grandchildren, once again, aspirations that they can look forward to.

We have, however, in the past little while seen and experienced some phenomenal downturns in our economic conditions. This disastrous economic situation that we are now facing is a result of the greed and unscrupulous actions of the financial institutions of the United States. Banking and insurance institutions began to tumble like a series of dominoes and affected the very core of our financial security and the future.

It is in these times and in these conditions that our government has to act very prudently and rise up to the challenge to make sure, even though we may be impacted by these circumstances, how we are going to mitigate and minimize the damage. It is with that in mind that we have seen how this government has risen up to the challenge.

In the budget that was declared not too long ago, we have now established ourselves a clear path and measures that we will take to make sure that the impact of this global downturn is minimized so that we can once again move ahead in the plans that we had of making our province the most successful province in Canada.

Having said that and having taken the measures of perhaps going into deficit financing, we have kept our eyes on what is important for our province in terms of health care, in terms of education, in terms of social services, making sure that enough funding will be made available for all these different services that are so very important to our province.

We have laid down a plan, and it is that plan that has every time given us that sense that we are following the right path. We are in the right direction. There has never been an action that this government has taken in the last eight years that resembles what used to be called a band-aid situation.

We have thoughtfully, cautiously and prudently managed the affairs of this province, which has brought us to this level of confidence not only among our citizens but confidence among the investment community right around the world. We are today looked upon as a province where people would want to come, play and work.

[1705]

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

It is with that confidence that I feel very fortunate and privileged to be a part of this team which understands how best to handle things and how best to make sure that our generation is protected and that our future generation would have the opportunities to deal with

matters so that they too can be just as successful as our generation has been.

These remarks that I've had the privilege to make today are pertaining to the throne speech, are pertaining to the plan that this government has set. There are so many challenges that we do have as we move forward. There are matters that we need to deal with, with our first nations community. There are matters that we need to deal with, with the climate change problems. There are matters that we need to deal with, with our seniors and their requirements.

As we move forward, I am confident that this government will deliver their promises. They will deliver in matters that are so very important to us. It is that that gives me the sense of confidence, that gives me the sense of belonging, that gives me the great pride in being a part of the team — a team that has taken us from the most disastrous abyss that this province has ever experienced to a level of prosperity, to a level of confidence, to a level where today I am proud to say that I am truly a British Columbian.

It is truly the best place on earth. I have in my life lived in various parts of the world. I've lived in Europe, I've lived in Africa, and I've lived in North America. I can say with confidence that the compassion, the sense of belonging, the sense of inclusiveness, the sense of acceptance of all different kinds of people who come to this country is so very much evident in British Columbia because of this government that has embraced that principle of pluralism, that principle of humanity, that very fine balance of allowing success and yet looking after those who need our help.

Having said that, let me once again repeat that I feel very proud to be a part of this government. I look forward to serving five more years in this place, being a part of this very successful government.

Hon. G. Campbell: I imagine it will come as very little surprise that I support this throne speech. We are living in very uncertain times, I think, for lots of people across the province. People are concerned about their jobs. They're concerned about their businesses. I think it's very important for government to lay the foundation for them to know that their future is going to be even brighter in this province than it has been in the past.

As I looked at the throne speech and saw the number of initiatives that are being undertaken not just to lay a foundation of stability and certainty across the province but to invest in the future of British Columbians through education, through advanced education, through enhanced apprenticeship programs.... All of those things are part of making our province an even stronger place, an even better place for all of us to live.

But there is a very important part of the throne speech that I wanted to take a moment to speak to you about in the House today, and that's the new relationship that we

are building with first nations. It was about three years ago in this House where I pointed out how important it was that we pursue the Kelowna accord and the transformative change accord.

[1710]

At that time I recognized the leadership that we'd seen from first nations chiefs, councillors and elders in trying to forge a new relationship for British Columbia that would give every aboriginal child an opportunity for the future, that shared in the province's prosperity, that shared in our strength and that actually created the kind of hopes in their communities that we all have and all enjoy in our communities.

I can say today that over the last four years, chiefs from across this province, from the B.C. Union of Indian Chiefs to the First Nations Summit, to the assembly of the aboriginal peoples, we have seen exceptional leadership and commitment to building that new relationship. I want to recognize the work, the commitment, the strength and the power of purpose that the chiefs have shown as they've helped us forge that relationship.

I said in this House three years ago — and I want to recognize the opposition; we're all very supportive of the initiatives that we spoke of that day — that I wanted there to be no doubt that this government stands behind our word, that we stand firm in our commitment that we made in Kelowna to the transformative change accord that we all signed, and we stand strongly to ensure that both of those documents are honoured in the province of British Columbia.

We said that the future of first nations as true partners in Canada was critically important to us. We said that constitutionally protected rights and title warrants a fundamental rethinking of our Confederation. So we eliminated the third solitude of Canada, where we brought aboriginal people into the full opportunities that Canada presented and British Columbia as a province presented.

We were quite clear that we wanted to confirm the new partnerships that we were building. We wanted to confirm long-term funding and support. We wanted to confirm that we were committed to finding the strength and the commitment in community after community in this province to build the kind of future for all British Columbians that they deserve.

We wanted to see results, and in the last number of years we've watched as we have seen, time and time again, first nations leaders and council members, chiefs and elders, help us forge that new relationship. We have a new relationship in education which says to first nations that are ready to embrace and take responsibility for the education of their young people, that there are ways that they can do that.

We have school boards across the province which have special programs specifically designed to meet the needs of young aboriginal people. We have a new aboriginal

health accord, the first ever aboriginal health officer. All of those things, all those steps, are important steps down the road to recognition and reconciliation.

In this province we recognize the contribution aboriginal people and indigenous nations have made to our history. When Alexander Mackenzie came to British Columbia and got to the Pacific, overland to the sea, he was guided by first nations. They took him down the riverways and the grease trail and got him to the Pacific Ocean. When the Spanish came up the west coast, they were greeted and welcomed by first nations.

When Captain Vancouver came into Vancouver, he was welcomed by the Coast Salish people with open arms. They welcomed him and said: "Hychka."

In this throne speech, the government committed specifically to a new relationship with first nations that is critical to our future. We said we needed to close the gaps in education, health, housing and economic opportunity, and this government intends to work tirelessly to achieve that goal with our aboriginal partners. We have begun our journey with treaties, with interim treaty measures, with specific revenue-sharing agreements in energy, in forestry, in mining. We have done that in tourism. We are creating true aboriginal partnerships with the government and with the private sector.

If we get it right, we'll make a significant provincial contribution and a significant accomplishment of our times. We called for an act of aboriginal reconciliation and recognition, and we are working on that.

Today I wanted, again, to recognize the generosity of spirit that first nations leaders have brought to this endeavour.

With open hands, they are reaching out and calling out to the business community and saying: "Let us join together in getting this right. Let us create the certainty that's essential for the long-term economic health of our province. Let us do that in partnership. Let us do that in recognition of our legal obligations, our legal rights, our constitutional rights, and let us find a way forward that recognizes not just the strength of our indigenous nations but that provides for true reconciliation across this province."

[1715]

I think that's a goal that everyone in this House should share. Forging a new relationship with indigenous nations is economically important. We all understand that. But more than that, it is the right thing for us to do. It is the right thing for us to work with aboriginal leaders and say: "Come and be part of the future." It is the right thing for an aboriginal child to know they will have the education, the health care and the support they need to pursue their dreams and to ensure that they can achieve them.

The act that we have been proposing, the recognition and reconciliation act, is about mutual respect and recognition. It's about certainty on the land base.

It's about closing gaps in education, health, and social and economic development. Together we can build that relationship, a relationship founded on mutual respect and recognition of aboriginal rights and title, a relationship that moves beyond the failed approaches of the past with constructive dialogue and a genuine desire to move forward together, as true partners in building an even stronger British Columbia.

We have engaged one another with new trust and a shared resolve to improving the quality of life and the living conditions for aboriginal people. Together, we are aiming to provide new certainty on the land base, new clarity about our mutual legal rights and responsibilities, and a new commitment to share decision-making and revenue-sharing and benefit-sharing.

We've made progress in the last four years. Today, as I said, first nations leaders are welcoming the business community, industrial sectors across the province, to join them in forging the kind of relationship that will be mutually beneficial to all of us. That certainty on the land base is central to our economic health in the future.

We can follow a path of litigation and confrontation, or we can follow a path of consultation, mutual understanding, mutual benefit and mutual strength in our commitment to creating shared prosperity for all of the people of British Columbia in every region of this province. Negotiation, consultation, accommodation and reconciliation of aboriginal peoples' constitutionally protected inherent rights and title, with the Crown's title, jurisdiction, and obligations are imperative for all British Columbians.

There are many days in this House where we talk of things of lesser import. There is nothing more important than embracing all British Columbians in our future. There is nothing more important than reflecting on the constitutional rights that all Canadians share and hold, aboriginal and non-aboriginal alike. There is nothing more important than British Columbia leading the way in recognizing the constitutional rights of aboriginal people.

But really, at the end of the day, this is about young children. It is about children that are born in different communities across this province, and it's about saying to them: "As an aboriginal British Columbian you should be proud of your indigenous heritage, you should be proud of your languages, you should be proud of your culture, you should be proud to be a British Columbian, and you should be proud to be a Canadian."

We want to help build a future for them. We want to look in their eyes and say: "You can pursue your dreams in our province." We want to do that with a sense of justice, with a sense of fairness and with a sense of commitment to bringing together every British Columbian and making our province an even better place for all of us to live.

That is what we're striving for, and with the constructive, thoughtful and, frankly, purposeful commitment

that we've seen from first nations leadership, I think we have to expect the same from ourselves. Reinforce that trust and build a future based on trust, mutual respect, and reconciliation. That is our goal. It surely is a goal that every member in this House would share.

[1720]

C. Wyse: It indeed is a privilege to be here in front of this House giving a response to the throne speech, a speech that is meant to outline a path for what British Columbians can expect from the government over the upcoming year.

But before I move on to my actual response to the throne speech, I do wish to acknowledge the Premier and the words that he has brought to the House on this particular item of reconciliation and movement in that area with the first nations within British Columbia. It is assuredly a goal that all members here in this House have and one that we must continue to strive to attain. We have to continue to strive to attain it daily, and we need to be there.

[H. Bloy in the chair.]

When I look back to where I'm from, those are principles that I wish had also been done for a long period of time — five, six, seven or eight years — that the same efforts had been put into achieving those same goals.

I happen to be from an area in the province where the certainty and the security that is being talked about in the throne speech is there and is in question. It is there as we move through the throne speech and look at the effect of having neglected going after that goal for five or six years, the effect that is being felt in the Cariboo and Chilcotin area.

These are topics that I have raised regularly and consistently in this House. I regularly and consistently have asked for concentration upon those items. I will come back to that theme shortly.

I wish to expand upon a comment that I heard in connection with the throne speech, and that is on living with a thought though it was 50 years old — that members on this side of the House need to examine how this 50-year-old thought is out of date. But colleagues, the 50-year-old thought that is being referred to is that 50-year-old thought of W.A.C. Bennett.

That 50-year-old thought is very simple, and it's very straightforward, and it is easily understood; and that is, the resources of British Columbians belong to British Columbians. The resources of British Columbia provide the wealth for British Columbians. The resources of British Columbia provide the money to provide for the services and the needs of British Columbians.

[1725]

That is the 50-year-old principle that I stand up in front of this House to discuss in the context of the throne

speech, a throne speech whose thrust and theme contain in it that the wealth of British Columbia becomes the property and the commodity of the large corporation. It becomes within the control of those corporations.

A corporation has a very, very important function to serve. That function is to provide profit, and that function is to ensure that a profit is provided to its shareholders. That is a fine, perfect, defensible function. However, there is nothing in there, in that function, that defines any responsibility for ensuring that that wealth also is there to look after the needs of British Columbians. It is their tree. It is their water. It is their mineral. It is their oil. It is their property.

The Premier said it much more eloquently than I, and that is: "All British Columbians must share in that same wealth." They must have equally provided to them the benefits of those resources regardless of how long they have been here in British Columbia. Shame upon governments in general for how a segment of our population has been treated. Shame on us.

Assuredly, as the Premier said, we must get on and address that aspect of it. Assuredly, we must ensure that first nations have full access to the resources of British Columbia.

I happen to be from a part of the province where the grease trail goes through. The Premier was quite right. It was first nations who showed the explorer how to get to the coast, but if you carry on with the history, it also was in that same part of the province where the first nations fought a war over how they were treated by the new settlers. To this day, the remnants of that action reverberate through my riding. It reverberates through the uncertainty of who owns what, who is responsible for what. That uncertainty exists, so litigation continues to be the means of resolving those disagreements.

Mining, in my area in particular, is feeling that effect of that uncertainty. The federal government, the provincial government and first nations all have gone back to court over mining issues as a result of people not being able to stay at the table to resolve these issues.

The question in my mind remains that if the government here had been concentrating upon resolving these issues for eight years rather than holding referendums on those issues, maybe we would have been further down the line and closer to addressing these issues.

[1730]

Interjection.

C. Wyse: That's theoretical. That's this year's throne speech that I'm addressing. This is the year 2009. This is dealing, as the Premier referred to, with the certainty and security that will come out of this throne speech and will strengthen British Columbia.

In my riding, in one of my communities, the unemployment rate is estimated at 35 percent. The forest industry

is having an exceptionally difficult time. They have been so for a while. There is no operation that is in production this week in Williams Lake in forestry, bar one — Pal Lumber, a small remanufacturing family outfit. Every other operation is shut down.

Within this budget, within this throne speech, when I look through for security for dealing with these times, I don't find it. I don't find mention of it. I don't find things available for dealing with retraining.

The throne speech makes reference to economic recovery. Economic recovery in part is dependent upon stimulating the economy, and that's contained right in the throne speech. But in order to do such, there has to be some wealth that is there.

My responsibility here in following the previous speaker, and my job, is to represent from the throne speech that certainty and future for where I'm from. Twice earlier in this session I had the opportunity to get up and bring the concerns from my constituents into this House, and I failed. I failed in bringing forward their cases because 30 minutes was not enough time.

I ended up in outlining and spending time directly upon the forestry, upon the agriculture, upon the mining and upon first nations and outlining those cases. I failed to bring into this House the effect — in part, the result — of the deregulation and what it has had upon individuals.

So with the throne speech, with that certainty, I have two cases connected with the forest industry that I would like to share with this House. Back in January a woman by the name of Heather Pryor approached me. I have permission to use her case. I have had her permission since January to use her case in the House to drive forward the importance of what has been overlooked in the throne speech — and that is, dealing with people and the situation that they're in.

[1735]

The lack of promise in the throne speech for providing assistance for retraining, for providing assistance for community transitions, for providing a view, a vision, for moving people through the workforce....

Heather, relative to me.... Mind you, relative to me, most people are young. But I think in this context, I would not be overstating my case by saying a relatively young individual who was laid off was looking for some retraining to take the best opportunity that life had presented to her, looking for that certainty and security that the Premier talks about in his speech.

Lo and behold, it turned out that she was falling between the cracks in getting funding support for retraining. That was her case. In approaching other levels of government — not very successful. But the constituency office was able to find a way and means to support Heather. On behalf of Heather and many, many others that are in this case, the throne speech fails.

Let me give another case that I would like to put in the record.

"Hi. I'm a 58-year-old millwright. I work in a sawmill in 100 Mile House, B.C. I was laid off for two weeks last Christmas/New Year's. We went on a work-share program with EI on January 4. I haven't got a dime yet, but it's not much anyway. Now I'm laid off next week. The company said maybe longer.

"That would have been an appropriate statement for me to have talked about back then. I can update. It has been much longer. I have a basic understanding what is going on in the world around me, the economy, etc. I do not have any understanding what is going to happen to me and my family. I am scared.

"What is available to me so that I and my family can live a decent life? We — and I speak for the workers, as I know they feel the same — are afraid and need to know what is available for us.

"Think on the throne speech. What is the government actually doing — not saying they are going to do but actually doing — to help us in our need to provide for ourselves and our families with a decent living?"

That is the situation from where I am from.

So looking through the throne speech, I reflect upon that 50-year-old adage that the resources of B.C. are for British Columbians. They own them, and they provide for their needs.

Now back to the throne speech. In the throne speech, reference is made to another resource: green power, run-of-the-river projects. Another resource of British Columbia, but that resource is turned over to the corporation. The corporation takes that resource and does with it as they see fit. B.C. Hydro has its restrictions on it and how it can go about doing and providing the same items. The control and use of that resource have been turned over to another corporation.

[1740]

Possibly some of my colleagues are a little skeptical of that statement. They will have their opportunity to discuss it such.

So an example once more, in my judgment, of the throne speech and the security and the certainty that is put into play. There are issues that come into play when you get into aspects of water. It's the basis of life. It's the second most important commodity for living, right after air, and that potable aspect of it and where it fits into the ecology cannot be dismissed, cannot be just simply moved around. There are issues that come into play with that, and those questions are in addition to where the value and wealth of those resources remain.

Another area from Cariboo South. I am doing the best I can to take the throne speech and relate it to the part of the province that's my responsibility to bring to this House, and the effect, the vision, that this throne speech has upon that area.

I'd like to take a little bit of time and reflect upon the vision for agriculture, as the Premier didn't mention that part of the province where the explorers went through. Mining opened it up to what we call, often from our history.... But it was agriculture that formed the basis for it.

I talked about this situation for forestry. Forestry has been having a very rough economic ride for three years during the good times, and it has now caught up in the Cariboo. But agriculture and ranching have

been having an exceptionally rough time for twice that length of time, and the throne speech doesn't hold out an awful lot for them, for their certainty and security. It contains suggestions that their situation is going to continue to be bleak.

We've talked about air; I moved by it very quickly. I spent some time on water as a resource. The other commodity happens to be food. That's agriculture. That's the practising part. That's the food security. We have an agriculture industry that consistently and regularly has had increased production costs passed on to them by policy decisions that have been made here in this House.

In ranching in particular, the effect upon that industry, with policy changes that have been made and increased costs passed on to them, has been huge. The threat here in British Columbia, which has the widest range of agricultural products available to it in Canada, has its food security threatened. I could not find anything in the budget speech, in the throne speech, that addresses those issues.

[1745]

Certainty and security. Those were the words of the Premier that he spoke here just before me. But in the throne speech I can't find that for agriculture. I can't find it anywhere. Possibly some of my colleagues from the other side, the ministers responsible in this area, will be able to point out to me what I might have missed in the throne speech.

We've had practice of taking the arable land, the most important land we have for food production.... Another resource of British Columbia is soil. Productive soils — something that requires hundreds of thousands of years to be made. I found nothing in the budget that suggests that the practice of taking B.C.'s most productive, arable lands and treating them as a land bank, to deal with the pet projects that are deemed to be more important than the ability for food security, overrides that importance. I can't find that in the throne speech.

Where I'm from our soil capabilities for agriculture are numbered like 4 and 5. But let me give you an example from where I'm from to make the point about how practices are put into place. We have a bad stretch of road. People have been killed on it — Cargyle curves. One side of the highway is Crown land with hills on it. On the other side of the highway ALR benchlands produce hay.

Where's the choice to put the correction in? Right through the hayfields. It's cheaper than using the other side of the highway. That's an example from where I'm from, where the sustainability of food production is not looked after.

Mr. Speaker, I see the green light is on, which means I'm getting near the end of my time. For the people back in Cariboo South, I hope I have been able to convey to this House that the throne speech doesn't provide that certainty and security for the conditions that are facing

the interior of B.C. in 2009. I hope I brought your case forcefully here into the House and that I've represented it fairly.

There is not the time for me to discuss here in this House the service levels, which also are not contained in the throne speech, that the people of the interior of B.C., Cariboo South, need — seniors care, care for the mentally ill, addictions, education in a rural environment, and the list goes on. But I have mentioned those in previous speeches.

I felt it was much more important to take this throne speech, as the Premier said, dealing with the certainty and security and matching that throne speech up to the conditions that face the interior of British Columbia, that face the people of the Cariboo, face the people of the Chilcotin. I thank you for this opportunity to have brought their points forward here in the House.

[1750]

Hon. B. Penner: I rise to make some remarks on the throne speech as well. I would just like to say that as the session has been progressing, I've been listening to comments from both sides of the House, and the contrast couldn't be more stark.

On the one side, you have a government that's laid out an agenda to provide confidence and certainty to British Columbians. During a time when the world economy is under strain and when other countries are truly struggling, British Columbia has continued to be a beacon of relative stability. However, we know that we can't take things for granted, and so our government is committed to continue to work to foster an environment that is good for the environment but is also good for investment and job creation by being friendly to environmentally responsible investment.

In stark contrast, you hear comments from members on the other side of the House that continue to resort to a class-warfare kind of rhetoric, criticizing people who would be entrepreneurs, criticizing the prospect of people being successful and criticizing the prospect of companies making a profit because they've been successful by pursuing employment opportunities for British Columbians in our province. That's truly a difference that divides that side of the House from this side of the House, and it's why I'm proud to call myself a B.C. Liberal.

When I think back to the early 1990s, I can remember what drove me to join the B.C. Liberals. It was an attitude from the then NDP government that said: "In order to bring people up, we have to pull other people down. We have to criticize those who have been successful, who have been able to do well in our province by taking risks, by pursuing education, by educating themselves, and by looking after their families and encouraging them to go on and get an education or supporting their family members and making investments in the province."

I thought that was a fundamentally wrong approach. I think we both agree on the ultimate outcome of where we'd like to get to, which is helping those who are less fortunate to rise up, but I fundamentally disagree that that can ever be accomplished in the long term by pulling down those who are successful. We have, instead, to look at other ways to raise people up to the level of success that they would like to aspire to.

That's what our government's plan commits us to. Whether it's increases in the education budget, increases in the budget for advanced education, whether it's targeted tax relief and making sure that our taxes for personal income taxes in British Columbia remain the lowest in the country or whether it's making sure that people who would like to invest in our province can have confidence that they will be treated fairly, we're putting forward an agenda to make sure that B.C.'s economy remains strong during these difficult and uncertain world economic times.

Now, I would like to focus in on one issue in particular because we've heard a lot about it today. Even the last speaker, the member for Cariboo South, I believe, was talking about our rivers as a resource. Well, he's right. It's a tremendous resource. I'm incredibly passionate about our rivers and our wild places. I'm fortunate to have been born in the northwest part of this province, in Kitimat, and spent much of my life in the back country wherever I can, enjoying our mountains, creeks, rivers and our plains in the Okanagan.

However, I also recognize that the world scientists and environmentalists are unanimous, virtually unanimous, that the single biggest threat to our global environment and to our rivers here in British Columbia and to the fish that swim in them is climate change. So it behooves us to look for solutions to reduce the impacts of climate change and to reduce our contributions to that global climate change.

Now, this is the part that gets difficult for the opposition, because their track record over the last 18 months has been nothing short of pathetic when it comes to grappling with the very vexing and challenging problem of global climate change and what we in British Columbia can do to show leadership and to make a commitment and contribution to reducing our contribution to that global climate change.

Our government's put out an aggressive plan. Even the opposition voted in favour of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, along with us, by 33 percent by the year 2020. They voted in favour of that target but then have voted against virtually every single method of reaching that target.

[1755]

They voted against the cap-and-trade system when we brought in legislation here last year. Much to my surprise, they voted against the legislation that I introduced. Then they turned around, and they voted against

a revenue-neutral tax on carbon emissions, despite all the economists who venture into this topic saying that that's exactly what you need to do to change the market behaviour and to signal that you shouldn't treat the atmosphere as a free garbage dump. The NDP voted against putting in place a tax on carbon emissions.

[Mr. Speaker in the chair.]

As I noted, they already voted against putting in place cap-and-trade legislation. When they voted against it, they didn't just vote against it in third reading during committee. They voted against it in second reading, which as you know, Mr. Speaker, is when a vote is held on the principle of a bill. So they voted against the principle of cap-and-trade legislation.

Then during committee stage debate, not only did they vote against it again, but they failed to introduce any ideas of their own through amendments. They didn't signal that they had any other ideas of their own except to stand up and vote against cap-and-trade legislation here in British Columbia.

That's not all they did in that last session. They also voted against a law that we brought forward — the former Minister of Energy and Mines, who's now gone on to the Senate — to bring in a renewable energy portfolio standard, or content standard, for fuels — a low carbon fuel standard. Other jurisdictions have done this.

In fact, only days before, the member from Esquimalt was out in the media criticizing the government for not doing this, and little did she know, we were working on legislation to do exactly what she was asking for. And when we brought it here to the floor of this Legislature, what did she do? She did a flip-flop and voted against the very thing she had asked for. Along with every other member of the NDP, she voted against legislation that would lower the carbon content of fuel in British Columbia. The hypocrisy didn't stop there.

Then they worked themselves into hyperbole and voted against amendments to the Utilities Commission Act, which for the first time requires the Utilities Commission, when they're reviewing proposals for new energy products by B.C. Hydro, to consider environmental impacts and their contribution to climate change. They voted against that amendment.

So almost every step of the way they've been opposed to the measures that, in my view, have to be taken if we're going to get serious about reaching that goal, which even they voted for along with us — to reduce our emissions by 33 percent by the year 2020. It's not going to happen simply by hoping it happens. That's what happened in the 1990s. The NDP talked about dealing with climate change, and then greenhouse gas emissions went up by 24 percent under their watch.

I think the most egregious example of their breath-taking hypocrisy and lack of attention to the real issue

facing the environment globally is their outright opposition to run-of-river hydro projects. Around the world small hydro is considered one of the leading ways that those jurisdictions that are fortunate enough to have that potential can harness it, in order to create energy without generating greenhouse gas emissions.

Just yesterday Dr. Andrew Weaver — who won the Nobel Peace Prize, along with a number of other individuals, for his work on climate change and who was Canada's lead author in preparing the report for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2007 — had an article in *The Vancouver Sun*. The headline attributed to that piece was: "'Environmentalists' are Abandoning Science."

In that article, dated March 24, 2009, Dr. Weaver points out that some environmentalists — and I would point out that the members of the opposition would be in that camp — are unfortunately overlooking the compelling scientific need to take immediate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Instead, what we're seeing from the NDP opposition is that they are putting their concern about ideology ahead of the concern about dealing with climate change.

Why do I say that? Because most of the justification for their outright opposition to this renewable resource here in British Columbia is based on who is going to make the investment. They're wrapped up and fixated on whether it's going to come from the taxpayer, who is going to fork out billions of dollars over the next number of years to build renewable infrastructure in British Columbia, or whether we can harness the creativity of the private sector.

Now, I note that even NDP Manitoba is calling for investment from the private sector in electricity production. They put out several calls for power proposals, and they contracted Manitoba Hydro, just as we're doing here in British Columbia.

[1800]

President Obama, south of the border in the United States, is calling on the private sector to seize the challenge to build renewable energy in that country to help them reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It's sadly...

Interjections.

Hon. B. Penner: Sadly, here the NDP in British Columbia seems to be living in their own ideological time warp. They would rather put their concerns about ideology ahead of concerns about climate change and greenhouse gas emissions.

If you think I'm somewhat embellishing this position, then explain to me how the NDP Energy critic last Friday could acknowledge to a reporter on CKNW that he thinks a recently approved project in the Fraser Canyon, which I had the pleasure of signing the environmental certificate for, could be good for the local first nations

and good for the economy. It's going to create 120 jobs in construction for a couple of years, including spinoff benefits of about a thousand person-years of employment in total, and increase electrical reliability for that part of the Fraser Canyon, which by his own admission suffers from electrical reliability issues because it's at the end of the line. He said that it's a good project.

Then, when asked how he would square those comments by acknowledging that that independent power project would be fairly large in size, 50 megawatts — it's a pretty large one in the overall scheme of things, compared to some of the smaller ones that they're also opposed to — he said: "Well, you know, if we were in government six months ago, it would not have been approved."

On the one hand, the NDP Energy critic cites all the reasons why it's a good project, including benefits to the first nations, the economy and, presumably, to the environment, but in the next breath he says: "We wouldn't have approved it if we were in government." Now, I think that defines the NDP's economic and environmental agenda should the most unfortunate thing happen and they actually win the next election. They've just articulated what their position is when considering new investment.

If it's good for first nations, good for the economy and good for the environment, they won't approve it if it doesn't square with their ideological agenda. Now, that is old-fashioned thinking. In fact, I think I'm being polite when I call it old-fashioned. Others would say that they're from a dinosaur era. It's time to confront the challenge of climate change. It's time for all hands on deck. We need investment from the private sector.

We're increasing spending, as already mentioned, in terms of education and advanced education. My colleague, the Minister of Health, is sitting beside me here. He's doing his level best to keep spending more money through the Ministry of Health, and boy, has he succeeded. Since 2001 I believe the health care budget has gone from something under \$9 billion to now we're projecting close to \$15 billion, if I'm correct. We're increasing public sector investment in public sector services.

Where does the NDP think we're going to get the extra money to replace all that private sector investment that we've been able to attract to British Columbia to build renewable energy infrastructure in our province? Some estimates are that there are \$4.5 billion worth of projects on the books. More recently, I understand there's an economic impact study being done that suggests the number is much, much higher than that.

Where are they proposing to go and get \$4.5 billion, \$7 billion, \$8 billion, \$10 billion or \$12 billion to replace the private sector ingenuity and investment that is willing to come to British Columbia, provided we have a regulatory framework that makes sense and provides some certainty?

We have tough environmental standards. How many times have we heard members of the opposition say that we're giving away B.C.'s rivers? If they actually believe that, then they're even less informed than I had feared, because you can look it up in the Water Act. If somebody applies for a water licence, it's a licence. What do you have to pay if you get that licence? Water rental fees. Note the word "rental."

There's a difference between renting something and owning it, and even members of the opposition must understand that. When you're a renter, you're not an owner. Maybe they think that they are sometimes. I don't know. But certainly in British Columbia, it is the law that if you have a water licence that allows you to generate power in British Columbia, you are merely a renter of that resource.

Now, here's a key difference. Before we were elected, under the NDP, they awarded these water licences in perpetuity or indefinitely to IPPs — yes, to IPPs. Under their government, they approved a number of small hydro projects, run-of-the-river projects, the very type of thing that they're now condemning, and they did so saying it would be good for the economy.

[1805]

In fact, I have a news release in front of me, and in it is quoted their current House Leader, the member for Port Coquitlam–Burke Mountain. The headline on that news release, dated August 1, 2000, is "Lower Water Rental Rates Stimulate Small Hydro Projects." Actually, I correct myself. The House Leader is not mentioned in this news release. It's another one which I'll get to in a moment.

But the former NDP Environment Minister is quoted. The reason they were lowering the water rental rates for IPPs under the NDP government in the '90s was, as the Environment Minister of the time, Joan Sawicki, said: "To take advantage of the environmental benefits offered by small hydro projects."

The NDP's previous Employment and Investment Minister — we all remember Gordon Wilson — said: "These projects successfully balance environmental sustainability with economic growth. We are enhancing the economic viability of these projects and making them a more attractive option for utilities like West Kootenay Power and B.C. Hydro."

What changed? In my view, the current NDP caucus is even more hostile to the private sector jobs and investment than they were under the Glen Clark NDP of the 1990s. It's hard to believe, because we look at that track record and what it did to the province, taking B.C. from first to worst in terms of economic growth per capita in the country during a time when the rest of the western world was enjoying an unprecedented economic boom. In B.C. we fell to the last place in Canada in per-capita economic growth.

Yet they were more friendly to the private sector and investment that's done in an environmentally respon-

sible way than the bunch of people we have across from us today, occupying 33 seats in here and who say they would like to be government but then turn around and, through their Energy critic, say that if a project is good for first nations, good for the economy, creating jobs and meeting environmental standards, they will not approve it if it's a private sector investment.

That is a very clear warning, and I guess we should thank the opposition for at least starting to articulate some policy and giving some definition to the public of what they have in mind to do to this province should they, most unfortunately, form a government after the next election — a risk that I say is far too great to take with a great province like British Columbia.

I'm going to quote a little bit more from what Dr. Weaver said on Tuesday in his article in *The Vancouver Sun*. He says:

"So even in a province fortunate to have lots of hydro, we still need a massive transformation in energy. All of those fossil fuel emissions need to be eliminated, and we must do so quickly if we are to have any chance of stabilizing the climate and maintaining human civilization as we know it.

"We need staggering amounts of energy conservation, emissions cuts and renewable energy, and all need to be deployed at an unprecedented rate."

Note what the esteemed scientist Dr. Weaver said: "We must make this transition at an unprecedented rate." What is the NDP's response to that clarion call for action? "We'll put a moratorium on it. We'll stall. We'll delay. We'll try to avoid making the uncomfortable decisions that sometimes can be challenging."

That's what we saw in the 1990s. Despite some small hydro projects going ahead, the single biggest IPP of that era, and of any era in British Columbia since then, was the natural gas-fired power plant in Campbell River. Today it still is the largest single operating IPP project — 240 megawatts. What is it burning? Fossil fuel. That was the NDP's vision in the 1990s.

Today they're saying their preferred approach now is to put a halt to run-of-the-river projects. That is bad. It's bad for the environment and bad for the economy.

The next topic I'm going to address is how it's bad for first nations, because just like the Kanaka Bar Indian band has a partnership with Innergex to build that project I approved last week — the opposition Energy critic says it's a good project, but he wouldn't have approved if the NDP had been in government — there are other projects around the province where first nations are partnering and benefiting by this investment that the NDP says they would like to stop.

[1810]

Let me give you a few more examples. There are investments taking place on the Sunshine Coast, but there are also projects taking place in the Sea to Sky corridor. Wrapping up construction today is the Ashlu Creek run-of-the-river project that has the full backing of the Squamish First Nation. I've had a chance

to personally go up to that site before and during construction.

I look forward to going there when the construction is complete. What struck me every time was seeing the young faces — the bright, shiny faces of people filled with enthusiasm, working on a good-paying job, building a renewable energy resource for British Columbia.

Included in that complement of workers are people from the Squamish First Nation, who are gaining important skills and trades, technical abilities that they can then take when this job is complete to future projects. But those future projects won't be there if the NDP gets a hold of the reins of power, because they said they would put a stop on those projects. That's a very negative message to the young people in first nations communities, who are looking for hope and opportunity.

Let me take you further up north up Highway 99, another project under construction. It's called the Fitzsimmons Creek project, located between Whistler and Blackcomb, also being built by Ledcor construction, a company that's been vilified by the NDP opposition. Ledcor construction is owned by its employees. It's a worker-owned company that the NDP opposition vilifies. It's based in Canada, but somehow that is also the kind of investment they don't want in British Columbia.

But I digress, because I was about to talk about this project at Fitzsimmons Creek that's under construction. Just a couple weeks ago they had an ad in the newspaper, which I won't put on display. They notified people that they're looking to hire people during this global economic decline that we're experiencing in B.C. We're still doing better than most, but we need important jobs. I'm pleased to say that at this job fair they hosted in Whistler, they were looking to hire traffic controllers, carpenters, labourers, surveyors, operators, civil concrete workers, earth-work employees and administrative assistants.

That's just to build the Fitzsimmons Creek project, which when completed will produce enough electricity from the snow melting off Whistler and Blackcomb ski hills to operate those very same ski hills. The same amount of power will be produced from that project that just happens to be equal to the annual consumption of Whistler and Blackcomb ski operations.

That's enough power to operate all the chair lifts, the snow-making equipment, the restaurants and other service facilities and, I believe, the accommodation for some of the employees. If the opposition had their way, that's another project that would not be going ahead and we would not be able to showcase during the 2010 Olympic games.

There is yet one more project I just want to point out, and it's taking place at the north end of Harrison Lake near my traditional territory. This is a project which hasn't gotten a lot of attention, but I believe it represents the single biggest private sector investment east

of the Port Mann and on the west side of the Cascade Mountains. It's up at the upper Harrison.

Cloudworks has struck a partnership with the Douglas Indian band, and starting last summer and through this winter more than 300 people have been working in an area where there's been precious little economic activity to date except for some logging up until the 1990s. It was severely curtailed.

But today there are young people working — and others not so young, but other people working — at the north end of Harrison Lake building a number of renewable energy projects that will bring electricity to that community for the first time without them having to burn a non-renewable energy source like diesel power.

When I was there last summer, I was touched by the fact that a number of the young women I met that are working in the camp — not so young maybe; they're approaching their 30s — told me that it was the first time they'd ever had a job. First time. Now, those are the kinds of projects our government believes in. Those are the kinds of things that first nations people are asking for, and we're prepared to help.

I know that some members are getting anxious about the time, but there are just a few more facts that I think need to be read into the record on this issue. The other claim that is also ill-founded and completely untrue is that somehow our government has prohibited B.C. Hydro from generating any new sources of electricity. I've heard members here say it just in the last few days. It's completely untrue.

[1815]

How do you explain, then, \$3.4 billion in B.C. Hydro's capital plan over just the next two years? I challenge any member of the opposition to go through the financial accounts of this province and show any investment getting anywhere close to that amount during the 1990s in B.C. Hydro. You won't find it. I looked. You won't find it.

The expansion of hydroelectric power production from publicly owned dams in British Columbia is on track to produce enough extra power for 227,000 homes per year since we took office. In contrast, from 1990 to 2001 B.C. Hydro added enough capacity for only 36,800 homes from its own facilities. So according to my rough math, we're producing from publicly owned and operated dams about six or seven times more on an incremental basis than what the NDP opposition did when they were government in the 1990s. Yet somehow we're being accused of not allowing B.C. Hydro to generate more power.

They're investing big-time in adding capacity. In fact, I had the pleasure and the honour of signing the environmental certificate for an expansion to the Revelstoke dam to add a 500-megawatt turbine. Under our government, B.C. Hydro is engaging in careful consultations about the possibility for a Site C dam.

What's the NDP's position on whether B.C. Hydro should build a new facility? Well, they're against that too.

So on the one hand, they're saying they would put a ban on private investment and renewable energy projects in this province, and they'd also tell B.C. Hydro: "You can't do your other project either — your next project."

On our side of the House we believe in a balanced approach. We believe in harnessing the innovation of the private sector for smaller-scale projects, particularly on the wind side where B.C. Hydro has no history or experience, and also with smaller run-of-the-river projects that B.C. Hydro hasn't expressed interest in, in the past and also allowing them to go out and engage in consultation with the community and first nations about the possibility for a Site C dam.

It's a balanced approach. We believe it's the right thing to do for our economy at this time to encourage jobs and investment. But fundamentally, it's the right thing to do for the environment. If we're not prepared to act in this province, then who will? Are we going to wait for China? Are we going to wait for poorer countries? Are we going to wait for jurisdictions that have fewer renewable energy resource options than we have in our province?

Most places in the world are not blessed the way that we are with a wide variety of options — from wind to solar to, potentially, tidal power someday or ocean energy, run-of-river hydro or even large hydro. Other jurisdictions don't have that opportunity, nor do they have the opportunity, like we have, for biomass generation.

Taken on balance, I support the throne speech and the government's vision that's laid out. I believe it indi-

cates that this government is serious about trying to protect people in British Columbia from the vagaries of the international marketplace, trying to make sure that we remain competitive and attract investment so that we're well positioned to take advantage of the rebound.

I'll just close with this. This is no time to be saying no to investment in British Columbia, to be telling people to leave the province and take their money elsewhere. We are still in an international competition for the best minds and the best ideas and the capital investment that we need to build a future for all British Columbians.

S. Fraser: Noting the hour, I would like to reserve the right to continue at the next day of the sitting, and I would move adjournment of the debate for today.

S. Fraser moved adjournment of debate.

Motion approved.

Hon. B. Penner moved adjournment of the House.

Motion approved.

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

The House adjourned at 6:19 p.m.

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